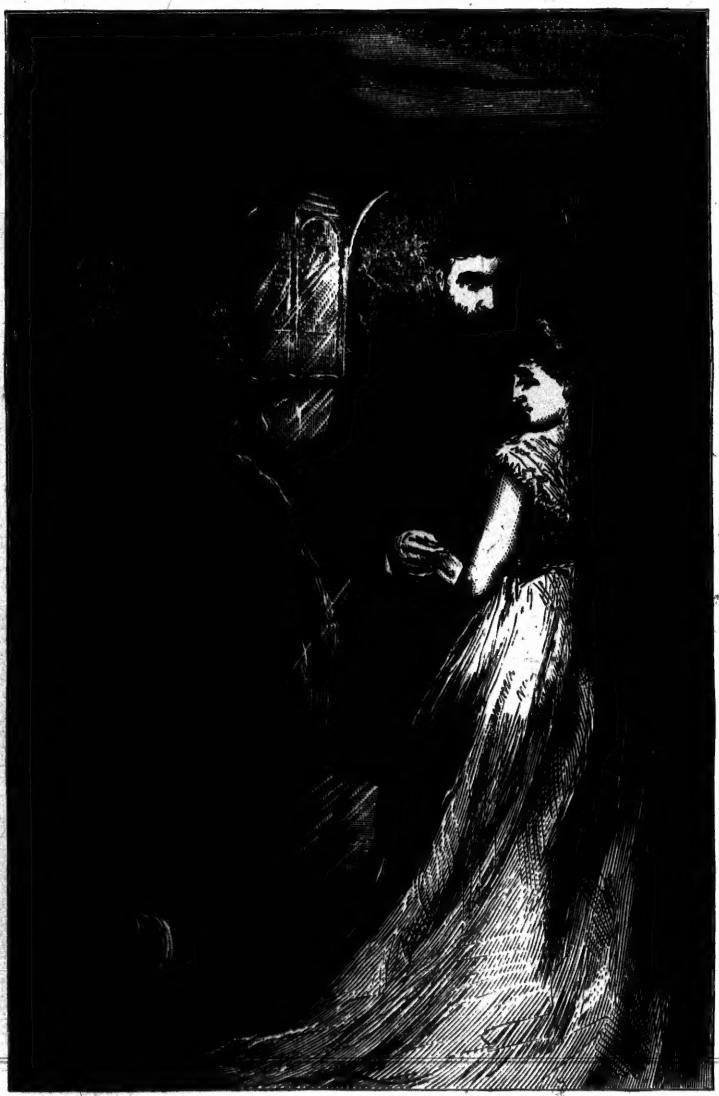


"THESE ARE MY DEAREST CHILDREN."—[SEE PAGE 246.]

THE CRYPTOGRAM.

A Novel.

JAMES DE MILLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE AMERICAN BARON," &c.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

FRANKLIN SQUARE.

1872.

THE CRYPTOGRAM.

A Novel.

By JAMES DE MILLE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE DODGE CLUB," "CORD AND CREESE," "THE AMERICAN BARON," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1872.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1870, by

HARPER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

A
819.3
D39
WO

THE CRYPTOGRAM.

CHAPTER I.

TWO OLD FRIENDS.

CHETWYNDE CASTLE was a large baronial mansion, belonging to the Plantagenet period, and situated in Monmouthshire. It was a grand old place, with dark towers, and turrets, and gloomy walls surmounted with battlements, half of which had long since tumbled down, while the other half seemed tottering to ruin. That menacing ruin was on one side of the structure concealed beneath a growth of ivy, which contrasted the dark green of its leaves with the sombre hue of the ancient stones. Time with its defacing fingers had only lent additional grandeur to this venerable pile. As it rose there—"standing with half its battlements alone, and with five hundred years of ivy grown"—its picturesque magnificence and its air of hoar antiquity made it one of the noblest monuments of the past which England could show.

All its surroundings were in keeping with the central object. Here were no neat paths, no well-kept avenues, no trim lawns. On the contrary, every thing bore the unmistakable marks of neglect and decay; the walks were overgrown, the terraces dilapidated, and the rose pleasaunce had degenerated into a tangled mass of bushes and briers. It seemed as though the whole domain were about to revert into its original state of nature; and every thing spoke either of the absence of a master, or else of something more important still—the absence of money.

The castle stood on slightly elevated ground; and from its gray stone ivy-covered portal so magnificent was the view that the most careless observer would be attracted by it, and stand wonder-struck at the beauty of the scene, till he forgot in the glories of nature the deficiencies of art. Below, and not far away, flowed the silvery Wye, most charming of English streams, winding tortuously through fertile meadows and wooded copses; farther off lay fruitful vales and rolling hills; while in the distance the prospect was bounded by the giant forms of the Welsh mountains.

At the moment when this story opens these beauties were but faintly visible through the fast-fading twilight of a summer evening; the shadows were rapidly deepening; and the only signs of life about the place appeared where some of the windows at the eastern end [illegible] rays of light stole out into the gloom.

The interior of the castle corresponded with the exterior in magnificence and in ruin—in its picturesque commingling of splendor and decay. The hall was hung with arms and armor of past generations, and ornamented with stags' heads, antlers, and other trophies of the chase; but rust, and mould, and dust covered them all. Throughout the house a large number of rooms were empty, and the whole western end was unfurnished. In the furnished rooms at the eastern end every thing belonged to a past generation, and all the massive and antiquated furniture bore painful marks of poverty and neglect. Time was every where asserting his power, and nowhere was any resistance made to his ravages.

Some comfort, however, was still to be found in the old place. There were rooms which were as yet free from the general touch of desolation. Among these was the dining-room, where at this time the heavy curtains were drawn, the lamps shone out cheerily, and, early June though it was, a bright wood-fire blazed on the ample hearth, lighting up with a ruddy glow the heavy panelings and the time-worn tapestries.

Dinner was just over, the dessert was on the table, and two gentlemen were sitting over their wine—though this is to be taken rather in a figurative sense, for their conversation was so en-

79319

grossing as to make them oblivious of even the charms of the old ancestral port of rare vintage which Lord Chetwynde had produced to do honor to his guest. Nor is this to be wondered at. Friends of boyhood and early manhood, sharers long ago in each other's hopes and aspirations, they had parted last when youth and ambition were both at their height. Now, after the lapse of years, foreworn and weary from the strife, they had met again to recount how those hopes had been fulfilled.

The two men were of distinguished appearance. Lord Chetwynde was of about the medium size, with slight figure, and pale, aristocratic face. His hair was silver-white, his features were delicately chiseled, but wore habitually a sad and anxious expression. His whole physique betokened a nature of extreme refinement and sensibility, rather than force or strength of character. His companion, General Pomeroy, was a man of different stamp. He was tall, with a high receding brow, hair longer than is common with soldiers; thin lips, which spoke of resolution, around which, however, there always dwelt as he spoke a smile of inexpressible sweetness. He had a long nose, and large eyes that lighted up with every varying feeling. There was in his face both resolution and kindliness, each in extreme, as though he could remorselessly take vengeance on an enemy or lay down his life for a friend.

As long as the servants were present the conversation, animated though it was, referred to topics of a general character; but as soon as they had left the room the two friends began to refer more confidentially to the past.

"You have lived so very secluded a life," said General Pomeroy, "that it is only at rare intervals that I have heard any thing of you, and that was hardly more than the fact that you were alive. You were always rather reserved and secluded, you know; you hated, like Horace, the *profanum vulgus*, and held yourself aloof from them, and so I suppose you would not go into political life. Well, I don't know but that, after all, you were right."

"My dear Pomeroy," said Lord Chetwynde, leaning back in his chair, "my circumstances have been such that entrance into political life has scarcely ever depended on my own choice. My position has been so peculiar that it has hardly ever been possible for me to obtain advancement in the common ways, even if I had desired it. I dare say, if I had been inordinately ambitious, I might have done something; but, as it was, I have done nothing. You see me just about where I was when we parted, I don't know how many years ago."

"Well, at any rate," said the General, "you have been spared the trouble of a career of ambition. You have lived here quietly on your own place, and I dare say you have had far more real happiness than you would otherwise have had."

"Happiness!" repeated Lord Chetwynde, in a mournful tone. He leaned his head on his hand for a few moments, and said nothing. At last he looked up and said, with a bitter smile: "The story of my life is soon told. Two words will embody it all — disappointment and failure."

General Pomeroy regarded his friend earnestly for a few moments, and then looked away without speaking.

"My troubles began from the very first," continued Lord Chetwynde, in a musing tone, which seemed more like a soliloquy than any thing else. "There was the estate, saddled with debt handed down from my grandfather to my father. It would have required years of economy and good management to free it from encumbrance. But my father's motto was always *Dum vivimus vivamus*, and his only idea was to get what money he could for himself, and let his heirs look out for themselves. In consequence, heavier mortgages were added. He lived in Paris, enjoying himself, and left Chetwynde in charge of a factor, whose chief idea was to feather his own nest. So he let every thing go to decay, and oppressed the tenants in order to collect money for my father, and prevent his coming home to see the ruin that was going on. You may not have known this before. I did not until after our separation, when it all came upon me at once. My father wanted me to join him in breaking the entail. Overwhelmed by such a calamity, and indignant with him, I refused to comply with his wishes. We quarreled. He went back to Paris, and I never saw him again.

"After his death my only idea was to clear away the debt, improve the condition of the tenants, and restore Chetwynde to its former condition. How that hope has been realized you have only to look around you and see. But at that time my hope was strong. I went up to London, where my name and the influence of my friends enabled me to enter into public life. You were somewhere in England then, and I often used to wonder why I never saw you. You must have been in London. I once saw your name in an army list among the officers of a regiment stationed there. At any rate I worked hard, and at first all my prospects were bright, and I felt confident in my future.

"Well, about that time I got married, trusting to my prospects. She was of as good a family as mine, but had no money."

Lord Chetwynde's tone as he spoke about his marriage had suddenly changed. It seemed as though he spoke with an effort. He stopped for a time, and slowly drank a glass of wine.

"She married me," he continued, in an icy tone, "for my prospects. Sometimes you know it is very safe to marry on prospects. A rising young statesman is often a far better match than a dissipated man of fortune. Some mothers know this; my wife's mother thought me a good match, and my wife thought so too. I loved her very dearly, or I would not have married—though I don't know, either: people often marry in a whim."

General Pomeroy had thus far been gazing fixedly at the opposite wall, but now he looked earnestly at his friend, whose eyes were downcast while he spoke, and showed a deeper attention.

"My office," said Lord Chetwynde, "was a lucrative one, so that I was able to surround my bride with every comfort; and the bright prospects which lay before me made me certain about my future. After a time, however, difficulties arose. You are aware that the chief point in my religion is Honor. It is my nature, and was taught me by my mother. Our family

motto is, *Noblesse oblige*, and the full meaning of this great maxim my mother had instilled into every fibre of my being. But on going into the world I found it ridiculed among my own class as obsolete and exploded. Every where it seemed to have given way to the mean doctrine of expediency. My sentiments were gayly ridiculed, and I soon began to fear that I was not suited for political life.

"At length a crisis arrived. I had either to sacrifice my conscience or resign my position. I chose the latter alternative, and in doing so I gave up my political life forever. I need not tell the bitterness of my disappointment. But the loss of worldly prospects and of hope was as nothing compared with other things. The worst of all was the reception which I met at home. My young, and as I supposed loving wife, to whom I went at once with my story, and from whom I expected the warmest sympathy, greeted me with nothing but tears and reproaches. She could only look upon my act with the world's eyes. She called it ridiculous Quixotism. She charged me with want of affection; denounced me for beguiling her to marry a pauper; and after a painful interview we parted in coldness."

Lord Chetwynde, whose agitation was now evident, here paused and drank another glass of wine. After some time he went on:

"After all, it was not so bad. I soon found employment. I had made many powerful friends, who, though they laughed at my scruples, still seemed to respect my consistency, and had confidence in my ability. Through them I obtained a new appointment where I could be more independent, though the prospects were poor. Here I might have been happy, had it not been for the continued alienation between my wife and me. She had been ambitious. She had relied on my future. She was now angry because I had thrown that future away. It was a death-blow to her hopes, and she could not forgive me. We lived in the same house, but I knew nothing of her occupations and amusements. She went much into society, where she was greatly admired, and seemed to be neglectful of her home and of her child. I bore my misery as best I could in silence, and never so much as dreamed of the tremendous catastrophe in which it was about to terminate."

Lord Chetwynde paused, and seemed overcome by his recollections.

"You have heard of it, I suppose?" he asked at length, in a scarce audible voice.

The General looked at him, and for a moment their eyes met; then he looked away. Then he shaded his eyes with his hand and sat as though awaiting further revelations.

Lord Chetwynde did not seem to notice him at all. Intent upon his own thoughts, he went on in that strange soliloquizing tone with which he had begun.

"She fled—" he said, in a voice which was little more than a whisper.

"Heavens!" said General Pomeroy.

There was a long silence.

"It was about three years after our marriage," continued Lord Chetwynde, with an effort. "She fled. She left no word of farewell. She fled. She forsook me. She forsook her child. My God! Why?"

He was silent again.

"Who was the man?" asked the General, in a strange voice, and with an effort.

"He was known as Redfield Lyttoun. He had been devoted for a long time to my wretched wife. Their flight was so secret and so skillfully managed that I could gain no clew whatever to it—and, indeed, it was better so—perhaps—yes—better so." Lord Chetwynde drew a long breath. "Yes, better so," he continued —"for if I had been able to track the scoundrel and take his life, my vengeance would have been gained, but my dishonor would have been proclaimed. To me that dishonor would have brought no additional pang. I had suffered all that I could. More were impossible; but as it was my shame was not made public—and so, above all—above all—my boy was saved. The frightful scandal did not arise to crush my darling boy."

The agitation of Lord Chetwynde overpowered him. His face grew more pallid, his eyes were fixed, and his clenched hands testified to the struggle that raged within him. A long silence followed, during which neither spoke a word.

At length Lord Chetwynde went on. "I left London forever," said he, with a deep sigh. "After that my one desire was to hide myself from the world. I wished that if it were possible my very name might be forgotten. And so I came back to Chetwynde, where I have lived ever since, in the utmost seclusion, devoting myself entirely to the education and training of my boy.

"Ah, my old friend, that boy has proved the one solace of my life. Well has he repaid me for my care. Never was there a nobler or a more devoted nature than his. Forgive a father's emotion, my friend. If you but knew my noble, my brave, my chivalrous boy, you would excuse me. That boy would lay down his life for me. In all his life his one thought has been to spare me all trouble and to brighten my dark life. Poor Guy! He knows nothing of the horror of shame that hangs over him—he has found out nothing as yet. To him his mother is a holy thought—the thought of one who died long ago, whose memory he thinks so sacred to me that I dare not speak of her. Poor Guy! Poor Guy!"

Lord Chetwynde again paused, overcome by deep emotion.

"God only knows," he resumed, "how I feel for him and for his future. It's a dark future for him, my friend. For in addition to this grief which I have told you of there is another which weighs me down. Chetwynde is not yet redeemed. I lost my life and my chance to save the estate. Chetwynde is overwhelmed with debt. The time is daily drawing near when I will have to give up the inheritance which has come down through so long a line of ancestors. All is lost. Hope itself has departed. How can I bear to see the place pass into alien hands?"

"Pass into alien hands?" interrupted the General, in surprise. "Give up Chetwynde? Impossible! It can not be thought of."

"Sad as it is," replied Lord Chetwynde, mournfully, "it must be so. Sixty thousand pounds are due within two years. Unless I can raise that amount all must go. When Guy comes of age he must break the entail and sell

the estate. It is just beginning to pay again, too," he added, regretfully. "When I came into it it was utterly impoverished, and every available stick of timber had been cut down; but my expenses have been very small, and if I have fulfilled no other hope of my life, I have at least done something for my ground-down tenantry; for every penny which I have saved, after paying the interest, I have spent on improving their homes and farms, so that the place is now in very good condition, though I have been obliged to leave the pleasure-grounds utterly neglected."

"What are you going to do with your son?" asked the General.

"I have just got him a commission in the army," said Lord Chetwynde. "Some old friends, who had actually remembered me all these years, offered to do something for me in the diplomacy line; but if he entered that life I should feel that all the world was pointing the finger of scorn at him for his mother's sake; besides, my boy is too honest for a diplomat. No—he must go and make his own fortune. A viscount with neither money, land, nor position—the only place for him is the army."

A long silence followed. Lord Chetwynde seemed to lose himself among those painful recollections which he had raised, while the General, falling into a profound abstraction, sat with his head on one hand, while the other drummed mechanically on the table. As much as half an hour passed away in this manner. The General was first to rouse himself.

"I arrived in England only a few months ago," he began, in a quiet, thoughtful tone. "My life has been one of strange vicissitudes. My own country is almost like a foreign land to me. As soon as I could get Pomeroy Court in order I determined to visit you. This visit was partly for the sake of seeing you, and partly for the sake of asking a great favor. What you have just been saying has suggested a new idea, which I think may be carried out for the benefit of both of us. You must know, in the first place, I have brought my little daughter home with me. In fact, it was for her sake that I came home—"

"You were married, then?"

"Yes, in India. You lost sight of me early in life, and so perhaps you do not know that I exchanged from the Queen's service to that of the East India Company. This step I never regretted. My promotion was rapid, and after a year or two I obtained a civil appointment. From this I rose to a higher office; and after ten or twelve years the Company recommended me as Governor in one of the provinces of the Bengal Presidency. It was here that I found my sweet wife.

"It is a strange story," said the General, with a long sigh. "She came suddenly upon me, and changed all my life. Thus far I had so devoted myself to business that no idea of love or sentiment ever entered my head, except when I was a boy. I had reached the age of forty-five without having hardly ever met with any woman who had touched my heart, or even my head, for that matter.

"My first sight of her was most sudden and most strange," continued the General, in the tone of one who loved to linger upon even the smallest details of the story which he was telling—"strange and sudden. I had been busy all day in the audience chamber, and when at length the cases were all disposed of, I retired thoroughly exhausted, and gave orders that no one should be admitted on any pretext whatever. On passing through the halls to my private apartment I heard an altercation at the door. My orderly was speaking in a very decided tone to some one.

"'It is impossible,' I heard him say. 'His Excellency has given positive orders to admit no one to-day.'

"I walked on, paying but little heed to this. Applications were common after hours, and my rules on this point were stringent. But suddenly my attention was arrested by the sound of a woman's voice. It affected me strangely, Chetwynde. The tones were sweet and low, and there was an agony of supplication in them which lent additional earnestness to her words.

"'Oh, do not refuse me!' the voice said. 'They say the Resident is just and merciful. Let me see him, I entreat, if only for one moment.'

"At these words I turned, and at once hastened to the door. A young girl stood there, with her hands clasped, and in an attitude of earnest entreaty. She had evidently come closely veiled, but in her excitement her veil had been thrown back, and her upturned face lent an unspeakable earnestness to her pleading. At the sight of her I was filled with the deepest sympathy.

"'I am the Resident,' said I. 'What can I do for you?'

"She looked at me earnestly, and for a time said nothing. A change came over her face. Her troubles seemed to have overwhelmed her. She tottered, and would have fallen, had I not supported her. I led her into the house, and sent for some wine. This restored her.

"She was the most beautiful creature that I ever beheld," continued the General, in a pensive tone, after some silence. "She was tall and slight, with all that litheness and grace of movement which is peculiar to Indian women, and yet she seemed more European than Indian. Her face was small and oval, her hair hung round it in rich masses, and her eyes were large, deep, and liquid, and, in addition to their natural beauty, they bore that sad expression which, it is said, is the sure precursor of an early death. Thank God!" continued the General, in a musing tone, "I at least did something to brighten that short life of hers.

"As soon as she was sufficiently recovered she told her story. It was a strange one. She was the daughter of an English officer, who having fallen in love with an Indian Begum gave up home, country, and friends, and married her. Their daughter Arauna had been brought up in the European manner, and to the warm, passionate, Indian nature she added the refined intelligence of the English lady. When she was fourteen her father died. Her mother followed in a few years. Of her father's friends she knew nothing, and her mother's brother, who was the Rajah of a distant province, was the only one on whom she could rely. Her mother while dying charged her always to remember that she was the daughter of a British officer, and that if she were ever in need of protection she should demand it of the English authorities. After her mother's death the Rajah

took her away, and assumed the control of all her inheritance. At the age of eighteen she was to come into possession, and as the time drew near the Rajah informed her that he wished her to marry his son. But this son was detestable to her, and to her English ideas the proposal was abhorrent. She refused to marry him. The Rajah swore that she should. At this she threatened that she would claim the protection of the British government. Fearful of this, and enraged at her firmness, he confined her in her rooms for several months, and at length threatened that if she did not consent he would use force. This threat reduced her to despair. She determined to escape and appeal to the British authorities. She bribed her attendants, escaped, and by good fortune reached my Residency.

"On hearing her story I promised that full justice should be done her, and succeeded in quieting her fears. I obtained a suitable home for her, and found the widow of an English officer who consented to live with her.

"Ah, Chetwynde, how I loved her! A year passed away, and she became my wife. Never before had I known such happiness as I enjoyed with her. Never since have I known any happiness whatever. She loved me with such devotion that she would have laid down her life for me. She looked on me as her savior as well as her husband. My happiness was too great to last.

"I felt it—I knew it," he continued, in a broken voice. "Two years my darling lived with me, and then—she was taken away.

"I was ill for a long time," continued the General, in a gentle voice. "I prayed for death, but God spared me for my child's sake. I recovered sufficiently to attend to the duties of my office, but it was with difficulty that I did so. I never regained my former strength. My child grew older, and at length I determined to return to England. I have come here to find all my relatives dead, and you, the old friend of my boyhood, are the only survivor. One thing there is, however, that imbitters my situation now. My health is still very precarious, and I may at any moment leave my child unprotected. She is the one concern of my life. I said that I had come here to ask a favor of you. It was this, that you would allow me to nominate you as her guardian in case of my death, and assist me also in finding any other guardian to succeed you in case you should pass away before she reached maturity. This was my purpose. But after what you have told me other things have occurred to my mind. I have been thinking of a plan which seems to me to be the best thing for both of us.

"Listen now to my proposal," he said, with greater earnestness. "That you should give up Chetwynde is not to be thought of for one moment. In addition to my own patrimony and my wife's inheritance I have amassed a fortune during my residence in India, and I can think of no better use for it than in helping my old friend in his time of need."

Lord Chetwynde raised his hand deprecatingly.

"Wait—no remonstrance. Hear me out," said the General. "I do not ask you to take this as a loan, or any thing of the kind. I only ask you to be a protector to my child. I could not rest in my grave if I thought that I had left her unprotected."

"What!" cried Lord Chetwynde, hastily interrupting him, "can you imagine that it is necessary to buy my good offices?"

"You don't understand me yet, Chetwynde; I want more than that. I want to secure a protector for her all her life. Since you have told me about your affairs I have formed a strong desire to see her betrothed to your son. True, I have never seen him, but I know very well the stock he comes from. I know his father," he went on, laying his hand on his friend's arm; "and I trust the son is like the father. In this way you see there will be no gift, no loan, no obligation. The Chetwynde debts will be all paid off, but it is for my daughter; and where could I get a better dowry?"

"But she must be very young," said Lord Chetwynde, "if you were not married uhtil forty-five."

"She is only a child yet," said the General. "She is ten years old. That need not signify, however. The engagement can be made just as well. I free the estate from all its encumbrances; and as she will eventually be a Chetwynde, it will be for her sake as well as your son's. There is no obligation."

Lord Chetwynde wrung his friend's hand.

"I do not know what to say," said he. "It would add years to my life to know that my son is not to lose the inheritance of his ancestors. But of course I can make no definite arrangements until I have seen him. He is the one chiefly interested; and besides," he added, smilingly, "I can not expect you to take a father's estimate of an only son. You must judge him for yourself, and see whether my account has been too partial."

"Of course, of course. I must see him at once," broke in the General. "Where is he?"

"In Ireland. I will telegraph to him to-night, and he will be here in a couple of days."

"He could not come sooner, I suppose?" said the General, anxiously.

Lord Chetwynde laughed.

"I hardly think so—from Ulster. But why such haste? It positively alarms me, for I'm an idle man, and have had my time on my hands for half a lifetime."

"The old story, Chetwynde," said the General, with a smile; "petticoat government. I promised my little girl that I would be back to-morrow. She will be sadly disappointed at a day's delay. I shall be almost afraid to meet her. I fear she has been a little spoiled, poor child; but you can scarcely wonder, under the circumstances. After all, she is a good child though; she has the strongest possible affection for me, and I can guide her as I please through her affections."

After some further conversation Lord Chetwynde sent off a telegram to his son to come home without delay.

CHAPTER II.

THE WEIRD WOMAN.

THE morning-room at Chetwynde Castle was about the pleasantest one there, and the air of poverty which prevailed elsewhere was here lost

in the general appearance of comfort. It was a large apartment, commensurate with the size of the castle, and the deep bay-windows commanded an extensive view.

On the morning following the conversation already mentioned General Pomeroy arose early, and it was toward this room that he turned his steps. Throughout the castle there was that air of neglect already alluded to, so that the morning-room afforded a pleasant contrast. Here all the comfort that remained at Chetwynde seemed to have centred. It was with a feeling of intense satisfaction that the General seated himself in an arm-chair which stood within the deep recess of the bay-window, and surveyed the apartment.

The room was about forty feet long and thirty feet wide. The ceiling was covered with quaint figures in fresco, the walls were paneled with oak, and high-backed, stolid-looking chairs stood around. On one side was the fire-place, so vast and so high that it seemed itself another room. It was the fine old fire-place of the Tudor or Plantagenet period—the unequaled, the unsurpassed—whose day has long since been done, and which in departing from the world has left nothing to compensate for it. Still, the fire-place lingers in a few old mansions; and here at Chetwynde Castle was one without a peer. It was lofty, it was broad, it was deep, it was well-paved, it was ornamented not carelessly, but lovingly, as though the hearth was the holy place, the altar of the castle and of the family. There was room in its wide expanse for the gathering of a household about the fire; its embrace was the embrace of love; and it was the type and model of those venerable and hallowed places which have given to the English language a word holier even than "Home," since that word is "Hearth."

It was with some such thoughts as these that General Pomeroy sat looking at the fire-place, where a few fagots sent up a ruddy blaze, when suddenly his attention was arrested by a figure which entered the room. So quiet and noiseless was the entrance that he did not notice it until the figure stood between him and the fire. It was a woman; and certainly, of all the women whom he had ever seen, no one had possessed so weird and mystical an aspect. She was a little over the middle height, but exceedingly thin and emaciated. She wore a cap and a gown of black serge, and looked more like a Sister of Charity than any thing else. Her features were thin and shrunken, her cheeks hollow, her chin peaked, and her hair was as white as snow. Yet the hair was very thick, and the cap could not conceal its heavy white masses. Her side-face was turned toward him, and he could not see her fully at first, until at length she turned toward a picture which hung over the fire-place, and stood regarding it fixedly.

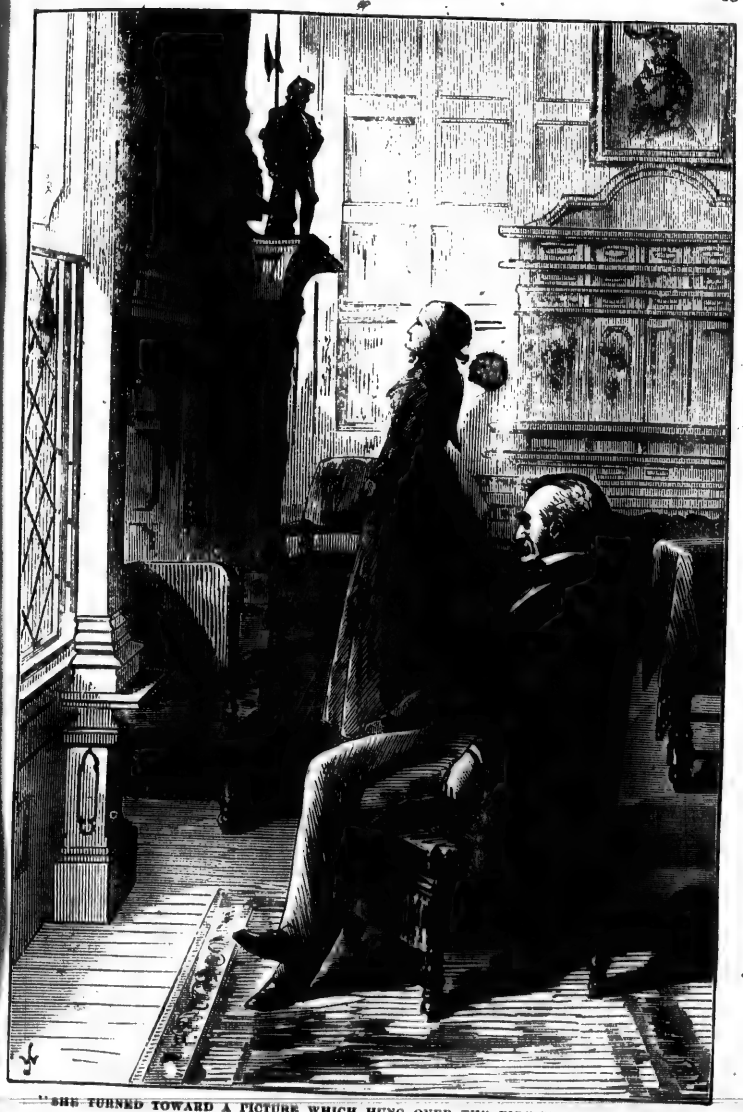
It was the portrait of a young man in the dress of a British officer. The General knew that it was the only son of Lord Chetwynde, for whom he had written, and whom he was expecting; and now, as he sat there with his eyes riveted on this singular figure, he was amazed at the expression of her face.

Her eyes were large and dark and mysterious. Her face bore unmistakable traces of sorrow. Deep lines were graven on her pale forehead, and on her wan, thin cheeks. Her hair was white as snow, and her complexion was of an unearthly grayish hue. It was a memorable face—a face which, once seen, might haunt one long afterward. In the eyes there was tenderness and softness, yet the fashion of the mouth and chin seemed to speak of resolution and force, in spite of the ravages which age or sorrow had made. She stood quite unconscious of the General's presence, looking at the portrait with a fixed and rapt expression. As she gazed her face changed in its aspect. In the eyes there arose unutterable longing and tenderness; love so deep that the sight of it thus unconsciously expressed might have softened the hardest and sternest nature; while over all her features the same yearning expression was spread. Gradually, as she stood, she raised her thin white hands and clasped them together, and so stood, intent upon the portrait, as though she found some spell there whose power was overmastering.

At the sight of so weird and ghostly a figure the General was strangely moved. There was something startling in such an apparition. At first there came involuntarily half-superstitious thoughts. He recalled all those mysterious beings of whom he had ever heard whose occupation was to haunt the seats of old families. He thought of the White Lady of Avenel, the Black Lady of Scarborough, the Goblin Woman of Hurst, and the Bleeding Nun. A second glance served to show him, however, that she could by no possibility fill the important post of Family Ghost, but was real flesh and blood. Yet even thus she was scarcely less impressive. Most of all was he moved by the sorrow of her face. She might serve for Niobe with her children dead; she might serve for Hecuba over the bodies of Polyxena and Polydore. The sorrows of woman have ever been greater than those of man. The widow suffers more than the widower; the bereaved mother than the bereaved father. The ideals of grief are found in the faces of women, and reach their intensity in the woe that meets our eyes in the Mater Dolorosa. This woman was one of the great community of sufferers, and anguish both past and present still left its traces on her face.

Besides all this there was something more; and while the General was awed by the majesty of sorrow, he was at the same time perplexed by an inexplicable familiarity which he felt with that face of woe. Where, in the years, had he seen it before? Or had he seen it before at all; or had he only known it in dreams? In vain he tried to recollect. Nothing from out his past life recurred to his mind which bore any resemblance to this face before him. The endeavor to recall this past grew painful, and at length he returned to himself. Then he dismissed the idea as fanciful, and began to feel uncomfortable, as though he were witnessing something which he had no business to see. She was evidently unconscious of his presence, and to be a witness of her emotion under such circumstances seemed to him as bad as eaves-dropping. The moment, therefore, that he had overcome his surprise he turned his head away, looked out of the window, and coughed several times. Then he rose from his chair, and after standing for a moment he turned once more.

As he turned he found himself face to face



"SHE TURNED TOWARD A PICTURE WHICH HUNG OVER THE FIRE-PLACE, AND STOOD REGARDING IT FIXEDLY."

with the woman. She had heard him, and turned with a start, and turning thus their eyes met.

If the General had been surprised before, he was now still more so at the emotion which she evinced at the sight of himself. She started back as though recoiling from him; her eyes were fixed and staring, her lips moved, her hands clutched one another convulsively. Then, by a sudden effort, she seemed to recover herself, and the wild stare of astonishment gave place to a swift

glance of keen, sharp, and eager scrutiny. All this was the work of an instant. Then her eyes dropped, and with a low courtesy she turned away, and after arranging some chairs she left the room.

The General drew a long breath, and stood looking at the doorway in utter bewilderment. The whole incident had been most perplexing. There was first her stealthy entry, and the suddenness with which she had appeared before him; then those mystic surroundings of her strange, weird figure which had excited his superstitious fancies; then the idea which had arisen, that somehow he had known her before; and, finally, the woman's own strong and unconcealed emotion at the sight of himself. What did it all mean? Had he ever seen her? Not that he knew. Had she ever known him? If so, when and where? If so, why such emotion? Who could this be that thus recoiled from him at encountering his glance? And he found all these questions utterly unanswerable.

In the General's eventful life there were many things which he could recall. He had wandered over many lands in all parts of the world, and had known his share of sorrow and of joy. Seating himself once more in his chair he tried to summon up before his memory the figures of the past, one by one, and compare them with this woman whom he had seen. Out of the gloom of that past the ghostly figures came, and passed on, and vanished, till at last from among them all two or three stood forth distinctly and vividly; the forms of those who had been associated with him in one event of his life; that life's first great tragedy; forms well remembered—never to be forgotten. He saw the form of one who had been betrayed and forsaken, bowed and crushed by grief, and staring with white face and haggard eyes; he saw the form of the false friend and foul traitor slinking away with averted face; he saw the form of the true friend, true as steel, standing up solidly in his loyalty between those whom he loved and the Ruin that was before them; and, lastly, he saw the central figure of all—a fair young woman with a face of dazzling beauty; high-born, haughty, with an air of high-bred grace and inborn delicacy; but the beauty was fading, and the charm of all that grace and delicacy was veiled under a cloud of shame and sin. The face bore all that agony of woe which looks at us now from the eyes of Guido's Beatrice Cenci—eyes which disclose a grief deeper than tears; eyes whose glance is never forgotten.

Suddenly there came to the General a Thought like lightning, which seemed to pierce to the inmost depths of his being. He started back as he sat, and for a moment looked like one transformed to stone. At the horror of that Thought his face changed to a deathly pallor, his features grew rigid, his hands clenched, his eyes fixed and staring with an awful look. For a few moments he sat thus, and then with a deep groan he sprang to his feet and paced the apartment.

The exercise seemed to bring relief.

"I'm a cursed fool!" he muttered. "The thing's impossible—yes, absolutely impossible."

Again and again he paced the apartment, and gradually he recovered himself.

"Pooh!" he said at length, as he resumed his seat, "she's insane, or, more probably, *I* am insane for having had such wild thoughts as I have had this morning."

Then with a heavy sigh he looked out of the window abstractedly.

An hour passed and Lord Chetwynde came down, and the two took their seats at the breakfast-table.

"By-the-way," said the General at length, after some conversation, and with an effort at indifference, "who is that very singular-looking woman whom you have here? She seems to be about sixty, dresses in black, has very white hair, and looks like a Sister of Charity."

"That?" said Lord Chetwynde, carelessly. "Oh, that must be the housekeeper, Mrs. Hart."

"Mrs. Hart—the housekeeper?" repeated the General, thoughtfully.

"Yes; she is an invaluable woman to one in my position."

"I suppose she is some old family servant."

"No. She came here about ten years ago. I wanted a housekeeper, she heard of it, and applied. She brought excellent recommendations, and I took her. She has done very well."

"Have you ever noticed how very singular her appearance is?"

"Well, no. Is it? I suppose it strikes you so as a stranger. I never noticed her particularly."

"She seems to have had some great sorrow," said the General, slowly.

"Yes, I think she must have had some troubles. She has a melancholy way, I think. I feel sorry for the poor creature, and do what I can for her. As I said, she is invaluable to me, and I owe her positive gratitude."

"Is she fond of Guy?" asked the General, thinking of her face as he saw it upturned toward the portrait.

"Exceedingly," said Lord Chetwynde. "Guy was about eight years old when she came. From the very first she showed the greatest fondness for him, and attached herself to him with a devotion which surprised me. I accounted for it on the ground that she had lost a son of her own, and perhaps Guy reminded her in some way of him. At any rate she has always been exceedingly fond of him. Yes," pursued Lord Chetwynde, in a musing tone, "I owe every thing to her, for she once saved Guy's life."

"Saved his life? How?"

"Once, when I was away, the place caught fire in the wing where Guy was sleeping. Mrs. Hart rushed through the flames and saved him. She nearly killed herself too—poor old thing! In addition to this she has nursed him through three different attacks of disease that seemed fatal. Why, she seems to love Guy as fondly as I do."

"And does Guy love her?"

"Exceedingly. The boy is most affectionate by nature, and of course she is prominent in his affections. Next to me he loves her."

The General now turned away the conversation to other subjects; but from his abstracted manner it was evident that Mrs. Hart was still foremost in his thoughts.

CHAPTER III.

THE BARTER OF A LIFE.

Two evenings afterward a carriage drove up to the door of Chetwynde Castle, and a young man alighted. The door was opened by the old butler, who, with a cry of delight, exclaimed:

"Master Guy! Master Guy! It's welcome ye are. They've been lookin' for you these two hours back."

"Any thing wrong?" was Guy's first exclamation, uttered with some haste and anxiety.

"Lord love ye, there's naught amiss; but ye're welcome home, right welcome, Master Guy," said the butler, who still looked upon his young master as the little boy who used to ride upon his back, and whose tricks were at once the torment and delight of his life.

The old butler himself was one of the heirlooms of the family, and partook to the full of the air of antiquity which pervaded the place. He looked like the relic of a by-gone generation. His queue, carefully powdered and plaited, stood out stiff from the back of his head, as if in perpetual protest against any new-fangled notions of hair-dressing; his livery, scrupulously neat and well brushed, was threadbare and of an antediluvian cut, and his whole appearance was that of highly respectable antediluvianism. As he stood there with his antique and venerable figure his whole face fairly beamed with delight at seeing his young master.

"I was afraid my father might be ill," said Guy, "from his sending for me in such a hurry."

"Ill?" said the other, radiant. "My lord be better and cheerfuler like than ever I have seen him since he came back from Lunnon—the time as you was a small chap, Master Guy. There be a gentleman stopping here. He and my lord have been sittin' up half the night a-talkin'. I think there be summut up, Master Guy, and that he be connected with it; for when my lord told me to send you the telegram he said as it were on business he wanted you, but," he added, looking perplexed, "it's the first time as ever I heard of business makin' a man look cheerful."

Guy made a jocular observation and hurried past him into the hall. As he entered he saw a figure standing at the foot of the great staircase. It was Mrs. Hart. She was trembling from head to foot and clinging to the railing for support. Her face was pale as usual; on each cheek there was a hectic flush, and her eyes were fastened on him.

"My darling nurse!" cried Guy with the warm enthusiastic tone of a boy, and hurrying toward her he embraced her and kissed her.

The poor old creature trembled and did not say a single word.

"Now you didn't know I was coming, did you, you dear old thing?" said Guy. "But what is the matter? Why do you tremble so? Of course you're glad to see your boy. Are you not?"

Mrs. Hart looked up to him with an expression of mute affection, deep, fervent, unspeakable; and then seizing his warm young hand in her own wan and tremulous ones, she pressed it to her thin white lips and covered it with kisses.

"Oh, come now," said Guy, "you always break down this way when I come home; but you must not—you really must not. If you do I won't come home at all any more. I really won't. Come, cheer up. I don't want to make you cry when I come home."

"But I'm crying for joy," said Mrs. Hart, in a faint voice. "Don't be angry."

"You dear old thing! Angry?" exclaimed Guy, affectionately. "Angry with my darling old nurse? Have you lost your senses, old woman? But where is my father? Why has he sent for me? There's no bad news, I hear, so that I suppose all is right."

"Yes, all is well," said Mrs. Hart, in a low voice. "I don't know why you were sent for, but there is nothing bad. I think your father sent for you to see an old friend of his."

"An old friend?"

"Yes. General Pomeroy," replied Mrs. Hart, in a constrained voice. "He has been here two or three days."

"General Pomeroy! Is it possible?" said Guy. "Has he come to England? I didn't know that he had left India. I must hurry up. Good-by, old woman," he added, affectionately, and kissing her again he hurried up stairs to his father's room.

Lord Chetwynde was there, and General Pomeroy also. The greeting between father and son was affectionate and tender, and after a few loving words Guy was introduced to the General. He shook him heartily by the hand.

"I'm sure," said he, "the sight of you has done my father a world of good. He looks ten years younger than he did when I last saw him. You really ought to take up your abode here, or live somewhere near him. He mopes dreadfully, and needs nothing so much as the society of an old friend. You could rouse him from his blue fits and ennui, and give him new life."

Guy then went on in a rattling way to narrate some events which had befallen him on the road. As he spoke in his animated and enthusiastic way General Pomeroy scanned him earnestly and narrowly. To the most casual observer Guy Molyneux must have been singularly prepossessing. Tall and slight, with a remarkably well-shaped head covered with dark curling hair, hazel eyes, and regular features, his whole appearance was eminently patrician, and bore the marks of high-breeding and refinement; but there was something more than this. Those eyes looked forth frankly and fearlessly; there was a joyous light in them which awakened sympathy; while the open expression of his face, and the clear and ringing accent of his fresh young voice, all tended to inspire confidence and trust. General Pomeroy noted all this with delight, for in his anxiety for his daughter's future he saw that Guy was one to whom he might safely intrust the dearest idol of his heart.

"Come, Guy," said Lord Chetwynde at last, after his son had rattled on for half an hour or more, "if you are above all considerations of dinner, we are not. I have already had it put off two hours for you, and we should like to see some signs of preparation on your part."

"All right, Sir. I shall be on hand by the time it is announced," said Guy, cheerily; "you don't generally have to complain of me in that particular, I think."

So saying, Guy nodded gayly to them and left the room, and they presently heard him whistling through the passages gems from the last new opera.

"A splendid fellow," said the General, as the door closed, in a tone of hearty admiration. "I see his father over again in him. I only hope he will come into our views."

"I can answer for his being only too ready to do so," said Lord Chetwynde, confidently.

"He exceeds the utmost hopes that I had formed of him," said the General. "I did not expect to see so frank and open a face, and such freshness of innocence and purity."

Lord Chetwynde's face showed all the delight which a fond father feels at hearing the praises of an only son.

Dinner came and passed. The General retired, and Lord Chetwynde then explained to his son the whole plan which had been made about him. It was a plan which was to affect his whole life most profoundly in its most tender part; but Guy was a thoughtless boy, and received the proposal like such. He showed nothing but delight. He never dreamed of objecting to any thing. He declared that it seemed to him too good to be true. His thoughts did not appear to dwell at all upon his own share in this transaction, though surely to him that share was of infinite importance, but only on the fact that Chetwynde was saved.

"And is Chetwynde really to be ours, after all?" he cried, at the end of a burst of delight, repeating the words, boy-like, over and over again, as though he could never tire of hearing the words repeated. After all, one can not wonder at his thoughtlessness and enthusiasm. Around Chetwynde all the associations of his life were twined. Until he had joined the regiment he had known no other home; and beyond this, to this high-spirited youth, in whom pride of birth and name rose very high, there had been from his earliest childhood a bitter humiliation in the thought that the inheritance of his ancestors, which had never known any other than a Chetwynde for its master, must pass from him forever into alien hands. Hitherto his love for his father had compelled him to refrain from all expression of his feelings about this, for he well knew that, bitter as it would be for him to give up Chetwynde, to his father it would be still worse—it would be like rending his very heart-strings. Often had he feared that this sacrifice to honor on his father's part would be more than could be endured. He had, for his father's sake, put a restraint upon himself; but this concealment of his feelings had only increased the intensity of those feelings; the shadow had been gradually deepening over his whole life, throwing gloom over the sunlight of his joyous youth; and now, for the first time in many years, that shadow seemed to be dispelled. Surely there is no wonder that a mere boy should be reckless of the future in the sunshine of such a golden present.

When General Pomeroy appeared again, Guy seized his hand in a burst of generous emotion, with his eyes glistening with tears of joy.

"How can I ever thank you," he cried, impetuously, "for what you have done for us! As you have done by us, so will I do by your daughter—to my life's end—so help me God!"

And all this time did it never suggest itself to the young man that there might be a reverse to the brilliant picture which his fancy was so busily sketching—that there was required from him something more than money or estate; something, indeed, in comparison with which even Chetwynde itself was as nothing? No. In his inexperience and thoughtlessness he would have looked with amazement upon any one who would have suggested that there might be a drawback to the happiness which he was portraying before his mind. Yet surely this thing came most severely upon him. He gave up the most, for he gave himself. To save Chetwynde, he was unconsciously selling his own soul. He was bartering his life. All his future depended upon this hasty act of a moment. The happiness of the mature man was risked by the thoughtless act of a boy. If in after-life this truth came home to him, it was only that he might see that the act was irrevocable, and that he must bear the consequences. But so it is in life.

That evening, after the General had retired, Guy and his father sat up far into the night, discussing the future which lay before them. To each of them the future marriage seemed but a secondary event, an accident, an episode. The first thing, and almost the only thing, was the salvation of Chetwynde. Those day-dreams which they had cherished for so many years seemed now about to be realized, and Chetwynde would be restored to all its former glory. Now, for the first time, each let the other see, to the full, how grievous the loss would have been to him.

It was not until after all the future of Chetwynde had been discussed, that the thoughts of Guy's engagement occurred to his father.

"But, Guy," said he, "you are forgetting one thing. You must not in your joy lose sight of the important pledge which has been demanded of you. You have entered upon a very solemn obligation, which we both are inclined to treat rather lightly."

"Of course I remember it, Sir; and I only wish it were something twenty times as hard that I could do for the dear old General," answered Guy, enthusiastically.

"But, my boy, this may prove a severe sacrifice in the future," said Lord Chetwynde, thoughtfully.

"What? To marry, father? Of course I shall marry some time; and as to the question of *whom*, why, so long as she is a lady (and General Pomeroy's daughter must be this), and is not a fright (I own I hate ugly women), I don't care who she is. But the daughter of such a man as that ought to be a little angel, and as beautiful as I could desire. I am all impatience to see her. By-the-way, how old is she?"

"Ten years old."

"Ten years!" echoed Guy, laughing boisterously. "I need not distress myself, then, about her *personnel* for a good many years at any rate. But, I say, father, isn't the General a little premature in getting his daughter settled? Talk of match-making mothers after this!"

The young man's flippant tone jarred upon his father. "He had good reasons for the haste to which you object, Guy," said Lord Chetwynde. "One was the friendlessness of his daughter in the event of any thing happening to him; and the other, and a stronger motive (for under any circumstances I should have been her guardian), was to assist your father upon the only terms upon which he could have accepted assistance with honor. By this arrangement his daughter reaps the full benefit of his money, and he has his own mind at ease. And, remember, Guy,"

continued Lord Chetwynde, solemnly, "from this time you must consider yourself as a married man; for, although no altar vow or priestly benediction binds you, yet by every law of that Honor by which you profess to be guided, you are bound *irrevocably*."

"I know that," answered Guy, lightly. "I think you will never find me unmindful of that tie."

"I trust you, my boy," said Lord Chetwynde, "as I would trust myself."

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING VISITOR.

After dinner the General had retired to his room, supposing that Guy and the Earl would wish to be together. He had much to think of. First of all there was his daughter Zillah, in whom all his being was bound up. Her miniature was on the mantle-piece of the room, and to this he went first, and taking it up in his hands he sat down in an arm-chair by the window, and feasted his eyes upon it. His face bore an expression of the same delight which a lover shows when looking at the likeness of his mistress. At times a smile lighted it up, and so wrapt up was he in this that more than an hour passed before he put the picture away. Then he resumed his seat by the window and looked out. It was dusk; but the moon was shining brightly, and threw a silvery gleam over the dark trees of Chetwynde, over the grassy slopes, and over the distant hills. That scene turned his attention in a new direction. The shadows of the trees seemed to suggest the shadows of the past. Back over that past his mind went wandering, encountering the scenes, the forms, and the faces of long ago—the lost, the never-to-be-forgotten. It was not that more recent past of which he had spoken to the Earl, but one more distant—one which intermingled with the Earl's past, and which the Earl's story had suggested. It brought back old loves and old hates; it suggested memories which had lain dormant for years, but now rose before him clothed in fresh power, as vivid as the events from which they flowed. There was trouble in these memories, and the General's mind was agitated, and in his agitation he left the chair and paced the room. He rang for lights, and after they came he seated himself at the table, took paper and pens, and began to lose himself in calculations.

Some time passed, when at length ten o'clock came, and the General heard a faint tap at the door. It was so faint that he could barely hear it, and at first supposed it to be either his fancy or else one of the death-watches making a somewhat louder noise than usual. He took no further notice of it, but went on with his occupation, when he was again interrupted by a louder knock. This time there was no mistake. He rose and opened the door, thinking that it was the Earl who had brought him some information as to his son's views.

Opening the door, he saw a slight, frail figure, dressed in a nun-like garb, and recognized the housekeeper. If possible she seemed paler than usual, and her eyes were fixed upon him with a strange wistful earnestness. Her appearance was so unexpected, and her expression so peculiar, that the General involuntarily started back. For a moment he stood looking at her, and then, recovering with an effort his self-possession, he asked:

"Did you wish to see me about any thing, Mrs. Hart?"

"If I could speak a few words to you I should be grateful," was the answer, in a low, supplicating tone.

"Won't you walk in, then?" said the General, in a kindly voice, feeling a strange commiseration for the poor creature, whose face, manner, and voice exhibited so much wretchedness.

The General held the door open, and waited for her to enter. Then closing the door he offered her a chair, and resumed his former seat. But the housekeeper declined sitting. She stood looking strangely confused and troubled, and for some time did not speak a word. The General waited patiently, and regarded her earnestly. In spite of himself he found that feeling arising within him which had occurred in the morning-room—a feeling as if he had somewhere known this woman before. Who was she? What did it mean? Was he a precious old fool, or was there really some important mystery connected with Mrs. Hart? Such were his thoughts.

Perhaps if he had seen nothing more of Mrs. Hart the Earl's account of her would have been accepted by him, and no thoughts of her would have perplexed his brain. But her arrival now, her entrance into his room, and her whole manner, brought back the thoughts which he had before with tenfold force, in such a way that it was useless to struggle against them. He felt that there was a mystery, and that the Earl himself not only knew nothing about it, but could not even suspect it. But *what* was the mystery? That he could not, or perhaps dared not, conjecture. The vague thought which darted across his mind was one which was madness to entertain. He dismissed it and waited.

At last Mrs. Hart spoke.

"Pardon me, Sir," she said, in a faint, low voice, "for troubling you. I wished to apologize for intruding upon you in the morning-room. I did not know you were there."

She spoke abstractedly and wearily. The General felt that it was not for this that she had thus visited him, but that something more lay behind. Still he answered her remark as if he took it in good faith. He hastened to reassure her. It was no intrusion. Was she not the housekeeper, and was it not her duty to go there? What could she mean?

At this she looked at him, with a kind of solemn yet eager scrutiny. "I was afraid," she said, after some hesitation, speaking still in a dull monotone, whose strangely sorrowful accents were marked and impressive, and in a voice whose tone was constrained and stiff, but yet had something in it which deepened the General's perplexity—"I was afraid that perhaps you might have witnessed some marks of agitation in me. Pardon me for supposing that you could have troubled yourself so far as to notice one like me; but—but—I—that is, I am a little—eccentric; and when I suppose that I am alone that eccentricity is marked. I did not know that you were in the room, and so I was thrown off my guard."

Every word of this singular being thrilled

through the General. He looked at her steadily without speaking for some time. He tried to force his memory to reveal what it was that this woman suggested to him, or who it was that she had been associated with in that dim and shadowy past which but lately he had been calling up. Her voice, too—what was it that it suggested? That voice, in spite of its constraint, was woeful and sad beyond all description. It was the voice of suffering and sorrow too deep for tears—that changeless monotone which makes one think that the words which are spoken are uttered by some machine.

Her manner also by this time evinced a greater and a deeper agitation. Her hands mechanically clasped each other in a tight, convulsive grasp, and her slight frame trembled with irrepressible emotion. There was something in her appearance, her attitude, her manner, and her voice, which enchained the General's attention, and was nothing less than fascination. There was something yet to come, to tell which had led her there, and these were only preliminaries. This the General felt. Every word that she spoke seemed to be a mere formality, the precursor of the real words which she wished to utter. What was it? Was it her affection for Guy? Had she come to ask about the betrothal? Had she come to look at Zillah's portrait? Had she come to remonstrate with him for arranging a marriage between those who were as yet little more than children? But what reason had she for interfering in such an affair? It was utterly out of place in one like her. No; there was something else, he could not conjecture what.

All these thoughts swept with lightning speed through his mind, and still the poor stricken creature stood before him with her eyes lowered and her hands clasped, waiting for his answer. He roused himself, and sought once more to reassure her. He told her that he had noticed nothing, that he had been looking out of the window, and that in any case, if he had, he should have thought nothing about it. This he said in as careless a tone as possible, willfully misstating facts, from a generous desire to spare her uneasiness and set her mind at rest.

"Will you pardon me, Sir, if I intrude upon your kindness so far as to ask one more question?" said the housekeeper, after listening dreamily to the General's words. "You are going away, and I shall not have another opportunity."

"Certainly," said the General, looking at her with unfeigned sympathy. "If there is any thing that I can tell you I shall be happy to do so. Ask me, by all means, any thing you wish."

"You had a private interview with the Earl," said she, with more animation than she had yet shown.

"Yes."

"Pardon me, but will you consider it impertinence if I ask you whether it was about your past life? I know it is impertinent; but oh, Sir, I have my reasons." Her voice changed suddenly to the humblest and most apologetic accent.

The General's interest was, if possible, increased; and, if there were impertinence in such a question from a housekeeper, he was too excited to be conscious of it. To him this woman seemed more than this.

"We were talking about the past," said he, kindly. "We are very old friends. We were telling each other the events of our lives. We parted early in life, and have not seen one another for many years. We also were arranging some business matters."

Mrs. Hart listened eagerly, and then remained silent for a long time.

"His old friend," she murmured at last; "his old friend! Did you find him much altered?"

"Not more than I expected," replied the General, wonderingly. "His secluded life here has kept him from the wear and tear of the world. It has not made him at all misanthropical or even cynical. His heart is as warm as ever. He spoke very kindly of you."

Mrs. Hart started, and her hands involuntarily clutched each other more convulsively. Her head fell forward and her eyes dropped.

"What did he say of me?" she asked, in a scarce audible voice, and trembling visibly as she spoke.

The General noticed her agitation, but it caused no surprise, for already his whole power of wondering was exhausted. He had a vague idea that the poor old thing was troubled for fear she might from some cause lose her place, and wished to know whether the Earl had made any remarks which might affect her position. So with this feeling he answered in as cheering a tone as possible:

"Oh, I assure you, he spoke of you in the highest terms. He told me that you were exceedingly kind to Guy, and that you were quite indispensable to himself."

"'Kind to Guy'—'indispensable to him,'" she repeated in low tones, while tears started to her eyes. She kept murmuring the words abstractedly to herself, and for a few moments seemed quite unconscious of the General's presence. He still watched her, on his part, and gradually the thought arose within him that the easiest solution for all this was possible insanity. Insanity, he saw, would account for every thing, and would also give some reason for his own strange feelings at the sight of her. It was, he thought, because he had seen this dread sign of insanity in her face—that sign only less terrible than that dread mark which is made by the hand of the King of Terrors. And was she not herself conscious to some extent of this? he thought. She had herself alluded to her eccentricity. Was she not disturbed by a fear that he had noticed this, and, dreading a disclosure, had come to him to explain? To her a stranger would be an object of suspicion, against whom she would feel it necessary to be on her guard. The people of the house were doubtless accustomed to her ways, and would think nothing of any freak, however whimsical; but a stranger would look with different eyes. Few, indeed, were the strangers or visitors who ever came to Chetwynde Castle; but when one did come he would naturally be an object of suspicion to this poor soul, conscious of her infirmity, and struggling desperately against it. Such thoughts as these succeeded to the others which had been passing through the General's mind, and he was just beginning to think of some plan by which he could soothe this poor creature, when he was aware of a movement on her part which made him look up hastily. Her eyes were fastened on his. They were large, luminous, and earnest in their gaze, though dimmed by the grief of years. Tears were in them, and the look which they threw toward him was full

"BUT THE WOMAN, WITH A LOW MOAN, FELL DOWN HELPLESS ON THE FLOOR BEFORE HIM."

of agony and earnest supplication. That emaciated face, that snow-white hair, that brow marked by the lines of suffering, that slight figure with its sombre vestments, all formed a sight which would have impressed any man. The General was so astonished that he sat motionless, wondering what it was now that the diseased fancy of one whom he still believed to be insane would suggest. It was to him that she was looking; it was to him that her shriveled hands were outstretched. What could she want with him?

She drew nearer to him while he sat thus wondering. She stooped forward and downward, with her eyes still fixed on his. He did not move, but watched her in amazement. Again

that thought which the sight of her had at first suggested came to him. Again he thrust it away. But the woman, with a low moan, suddenly flung herself on the floor before him, and reaching out her hands clasped his feet, and he felt her feeble frame all shaken by sobs and shudders. He sat spell-bound. He looked at her for a moment aghast. Then he reached forth his hands, and without speaking a word took hers, and tried to lift her up. She let herself be raised till she was on her knees, and then raised her head once more. She gave him an indescribable look, and in a low voice, which was little above a whisper, but which penetrated to the very depths of his soul, pronounced one single solitary word, ——.

The General heard it. His face grew as pale and as rigid as the face of a corpse; the blood seemed to leave his heart; his lips grew white; he dropped her hands, and sat regarding her with eyes in which there was nothing less than horror. The woman saw it, and once more fell with a low moan to the floor.

"My God!" groaned the General at last, and said not another word, but sat rigid and mute while the woman lay on the floor at his feet. The horror which that word had caused for some time overmastered him, and he sat staring vacantly. But the horror was not against the woman who had called it up, and who lay prostrate before him. She could not have been personally abhorrent, for in a few minutes, with a start, he noticed her once more, and his face was overspread by an anguish of pity and sympathy. He raised her up, he led her to a couch, and made her sit down, and then sat in silence before her with his face buried in his hands. She reclined on the couch with her countenance turned toward him, trembling still, and panting for breath, with her right hand under her face, and her left pressed tightly against her heart. At times she looked at the General with mournful inquiry, and seemed to be patiently waiting for him to speak. An hour passed in silence. The General seemed to be struggling with recollections that overwhelmed him. At last he raised his head, and regarded her in solemn silence, and still his face and his eyes bore that expression of unutterable pity and sympathy which dwelt there when he raised her from the floor.

After a time he addressed her in a low voice, the tones of which were tender and full of sadness. She replied, and a conversation followed which lasted for hours. It involved things of fearful moment—crime, sin, shame, the perfidy of traitors, the devotion of faithful ones, the sharp pang of injured love, the long anguish of despair, the deathless fidelity of devoted affection. But the report of this conversation and the recital of these things do not belong to this place. It is enough to say that when at last Mrs. Hart arose it was with a serener face and a steadier step than had been seen in her for years.

That night the General did not close his eyes. His friend, his business, even his daughter, all were forgotten, as though his soul were overwhelmed and crushed by the weight of some tremendous revelation.

CHAPTER V.

THE FUTURE BRIDE.

It had been arranged that Guy should accompany General Pomeroy up to London, partly for the sake of arranging about the matters relating to the Chetwynde estates, and partly for the purpose of seeing the one who was some day to be his wife. Lord Chetwynde was unable to undergo the fatigue of traveling, and had to leave every thing to his lawyers and Guy.

At the close of a wearisome day in the train they reached London, and drove at once to the General's lodgings in Great James Street. The door was opened by a tall, swarthy woman, whose Indian nationality was made manifest by the gay-colored turban which surmounted her head, as well as by her face and figure. At the sight of the General she burst out into exclamations of joy.

"Welcome home, sahib; welcome home!" she cried. "Little missy, her fret much after you."

"I am sorry for that, nurse," said the General, kindly.

As he was speaking they were startled by a piercing scream from an adjoining apartment, followed by a shrill voice uttering some words which ended in a shriek. The General entered the house, and hastened to the room from which the sounds proceeded, and Guy followed him. The uproar was speedily accounted for by the tableau which presented itself on opening the door. It was a tableau extremely vivant, and represented a small girl, with violent gesticulations, in the act of rejecting a dainty little meal which a maid, who stood by her with a tray, was vainly endeavoring to induce her to accept. The young lady's arguments were too forcible to admit of gainsaying, for the servant did not dare to

TER V.

RE BRIDE.

that Guy should accom-
up to London, partly for
bout the matters relat-
estates, and partly for
one who was some day
Chetwynde was unable
f traveling, and had to
awyers and Guy.
risome day in the train
nd drove at once to the
eat James Street. The
, swarthy woman, whose
made manifest by the
surmounted her head,
d figure. At the sight
out into exclamations

hib; welcome home!"
y, her fret much after

, nurse," said the Gen-

ey were startled by a
adjoining apartment,
uttering some words
The General entered
o the room from which
nd Guy followed him.
accounted for by the
itself on opening the
extremely vivant, and
with violent gesticula-
ng a dainty little meal
by her with a tray, was
ce her to accept. The
ere too forcible to ad-
servant did not dare to

venture within reach of either the hands or feet of her small but vigorous opponent. The presence of the tray prevented her from defending herself in any way, and she was about retiring, worsted, from the encounter, when the entrance of the gentlemen gave a new turn to the position of affairs. The child saw them at once; her screams of rage changed into a cry of joy, and the face which had been distorted with passion suddenly became radiant with delight.

"Papa! papa!" she cried, and, springing forward, she darted to his embrace, and twined her arms about his neck with a sob which her joy had wrung from her.

"Darling papa!" she cried; "I thought you were never coming back. How could you leave me so long alone?" and, saying this, she burst into a passion of tears, while her father in vain tried to soothe her.

At this strange revelation of the General's daughter Guy stood perplexed and wondering. Certainly he had not been prepared for this. His *fiancée* was undoubtedly of a somewhat stormy nature, and in the midst of his bewilderment he was conscious of feeling deeply reconciled to her ten years.

At length her father succeeded in quieting her, and, taking her arms from his neck, he placed her on his knee, and said:

"My darling, here is a gentleman waiting all this time to speak to you. Come, go over to him and shake hands with him."

At this the child turned her large black eyes on Guy, and scanned him superciliously from head to foot. The result seemed to satisfy her, for she advanced a few steps to take the hand which he had smilingly held out; but a thought seemed suddenly to strike her which arrested her progress half-way.

"Did *he* keep you, papa?" she said, abruptly, while a jerk of her head in Guy's direction signified the proper noun to which the pronoun referred.

"He had something to do with it," answered her father, with a smile.

"Then I sha'n't shake hands with him," she said, resolutely; and, putting the aforesaid appendages behind her back to prevent any forcible appropriation of them, she hurried away, and clambered up on her father's knee. The General, knowing probably by painful experience the futility of trying to combat any determination of this very decided young lady, did not attempt to make any remonstrance, but allowed her to establish herself in her accustomed position. During this process Guy had leisure to inspect her. This he did without *any* feeling of the immense importance of this child's character to his own future life, without thinking that this little creature might be destined to raise him up to heaven or thrust him down to hell, but only with the idle, critical view of an uninterested spectator. Guy was, in fact, too young to estimate the future, and things which were connected with that future, at their right value. He was little more than a boy, and so he looked with a boy's eyes upon this singular child.

She struck him as the oddest little mortal that he had ever come across. She was very tiny, not taller than many children of eight, and so slight and fragile that she looked as if a breath might blow her away. But if in figure she looked eight, in face she looked fifty. In that face there was no childishness whatever. It was a thin, peaked, sallow face, with a discontented expression; her features were small and pinched, her hair, which was of inky blackness, fell on her shoulders in long, straight locks, without a ripple or a wave in them. She looked like an elf, but still this elfish little creature was redeemed from the hideousness which else might have been her doom by eyes of the most wonderful brilliancy. Large, luminous, potent eyes—intensely black, and deep as the depths of ocean, they seemed to fill her whole face; and in moments of excitement they could light up with volcanic fires, revealing the intensity of that nature which lay beneath. In repose they were unfathomable, and defied all conjecture as to what their possessor might develop into.

All this Guy noticed, as far as was possible to one so young and inexperienced; and the general result of this survey was a state of bewilderment and perplexity. He could not make her out. She was a puzzle to him, and certainly not a very attractive one.

When she had finally adjusted herself on her father's knee, the General, after the fashion of parents from time immemorial, asked:

"Has my darling been a good child since papa has been away?"

The question may have been a stereotyped one. Not so the answer, which came out full and decided, in a tone free alike from penitence or bravado, but giving only a simple statement of facts.

"No," she said, "I have not been a good girl. I've been very naughty indeed. I haven't minded any thing that was said to me. I scratched the ayah, and kicked Sarah. I bit Sarah too. Besides, I spilt my rice and milk, and broke the plates, and I was just going to starve myself to death."

At this recital of childish enormities, with its tragical ending, Guy burst into a loud laugh. The child raised herself from her father's shoulder, and, fixing her large eyes upon him, said slowly, and with set teeth:

"I hate you!"

She looked so uncanny as she said this, and the expression of her eyes was so intense in its malignity, that Guy absolutely started.

"Hush," exclaimed her father, more peremptorily than usual; "you must not be so rude."

As he spoke she again looked at Guy, with a vindictive expression, but did not deign to speak. The face seemed to him to be utterly diabolical and detestable. She looked at him for a moment, and then her head sank down upon her father's shoulder.

The General now made an effort to turn the conversation to where it had left off, and reverting to Zillah's confession he said:

"I thought my little girl never broke her word, and that when she promised to be good while I was away, I could depend upon her being so."

This reproach seemed to touch her. She sprang up instantly and exclaimed, in vehement tones:

"It was you who broke your promise to me. You said you would come back in two days, and you staid four. I did keep my word. I was good the first two days. Ask the ayah. When I found that you had deceived me, then I did not care."

"But you should have trusted me, my child," said the General, in a tone of mild rebuke. "You should have known that I must have had some good reason for disappointing you. I had very important business to attend to—business, darling, which very nearly affects your happiness. Some day you shall hear about it."

"But I don't want to hear about any thing that will keep you away from me," said Zillah, peevishly. "Promise never to leave me again."

"Not if I can help it, my child," said the General, kissing her fondly.

"No; but promise that you won't at all," persisted Zillah. "Promise never to leave me at all. Promise, promise, papa; promise—promise."

"Well," said the General, "I'll promise to take you with me the next time. That will do, won't it?"

"But I don't want to go away," said this sweet child; "and I won't go away."

The General gave a despairing glance at Guy, who he knew was a spectator of this scene. He felt a vague desire to get Guy alone so as to explain to him that this was only occasional and accidental, and that Zillah was really one of the sweetest and most angelic children that ever were born. Nor would this good General have consciously violated the truth in saying so; for in his heart of hearts he believed all this of his loved but sadly spoiled child. The opportunity for such explanations did not occur, however, and the General had the painful consciousness that Guy was seeing his future bride under somewhat disadvantageous circumstances. Still he trusted that the affectionate nature of Zillah would reveal itself to Guy, and make a deep impression upon him.

While such thoughts as these were passing through his mind, and others of a very varied nature were occurring to Guy, the maid Sarah arrived to take her young charge to bed. The attempt to do so roused Zillah to the most active resistance. She had made up her mind not to yield. "I won't," she cried—"I won't go to bed. I will never go away from papa a single instant until that horrid man is gone. I know he will take you away again, and I hate him. Why don't you make him go, papa?"

At this remark, which was so flattering to Guy, the General made a fresh effort to appease his daughter, but with no better success than before. Children and fools, says the proverb, speak the truth; and the truth which was spoken in this instance was not very agreeable to the visitor at whom it was flung. But Guy looked on with a smile, and nothing in his face gave any sign of the feelings that he might have. He certainly had not been prepared for any approach to any thing of this sort. On the journey the General had alluded so often to that daughter, who was always uppermost in his mind, that Guy had expected an outburst of rapturous affection from her. Had he been passed by unnoticed, he would have thought nothing of it; but the malignancy of her look, and the venom of her words, startled him, yet he was too good-hearted and considerate to exhibit any feeling whatever.

Sarah's effort to take Zillah away had resulted in such a complete failure that she retired discomfited, and there was rather an awkward period, in which the General made a faint effort to induce his daughter to say something civil to Guy. This, however, was another failure, and in a sort of mild despair he resigned himself to her wayward humor.

At last dinner was announced. Zillah still refused to leave her father, so that he was obliged, greatly to his own discomfort, to keep her on his knee during the meal. When the soup and fish were going on she was comparatively quiet; but at the first symptoms of entrées she became restive, and popping up her quaint little head to a level with the table, she eyed the edibles with the air of an habitué at the Lord Mayor's banquet. Kaviole was handed round. This brought matters to a crisis.

"A plate and a fork for me, Thomas," she ordered, imperiously.

"But, my darling," remonstrated her father, "this is much too rich for you so late at night."

"I like kaviole," was her simple reply, given with the air of one who is presenting an unanswerable argument, and so indeed it proved to be.

This latter scene was re-enacted, with but small variations, whenever any thing appeared which met with her ladyship's approval; and Guy found that in spite of her youth she was a decided connoisseur in the delicacies of the table. Now, to tell the truth, he was not at all fond of children; but this one excited in him a positive horror. There seemed to be something in her weird and uncanny; and he found himself constantly speculating as to how he could ever become reconciled to her; or what changes future years could make in her; and whether the lapse of time could by any possibility develop this impish being into any sort of a presentable woman. From the moment that he saw her he felt that the question of beauty must be abandoned forever; it would be enough if she could prove to be one with whom a man might live with any degree of domestic comfort. But the prospect of taking her at some period in the future to preside over Chetwynde Castle filled him with complete dismay. He now began to realize what his father had faintly suggested—namely, that his part of the agreement might hereafter prove a sacrifice. The prospect certainly looked dark, and for a short time he felt somewhat downcast; but he was young and hopeful, and in the end he put all these thoughts from him as in some sort treacherous to his kind old friend, and made a resolute determination, in spite of fate, to keep his vow with him.

After anticipating the dessert, and preventing her father from taking cheese, on the ground that she did not like it, nature at last took pity on that much enduring and long suffering man, and threw over the daughter the mantle of sweet unconsciousness. Miss Pomeroy fell asleep. In that helpless condition she was quietly conveyed from her father's arms to bed, to the unspeakable relief of Guy, who felt, as the door closed, as if a fearful incubus had been removed.

On the following morning he started by an early train for Dublin, so that on this occasion he had no further opportunity of improving his acquaintance with his lovely bride. Need it be said that the loss was not regretted by the future husband?

CHAPTER VI.

TWO IMPORTANT CHARACTERS.

About five years passed away since the events narrated in the last chapter. The General's household had left their London lodgings not long after Guy's visit, and had removed to the family seat at Pomeroy Court, where they had remained ever since. During these years Guy had been living the life common with young officers, moving about from place to place, going sometimes on a visit to his father, and, on the whole, extracting an uncommonly large amount of enjoyment out of life. The memory of his betrothal never troubled him; he fortunately escaped any affair of the heart more serious than an idle flirtation in a garrison town; the odd scene of his visit to General Pomeroy's lodgings soon faded into the remote past; and the projected marriage was banished in his mind to the dim shades of a remote future. As for the two old men, they only met once or twice in all these years. General Pomeroy could not manage very well to leave his daughter, and Lord Chetwynde's health did not allow him to visit Pomeroy. He often urged the General to bring Zillah with him to Chetwynde Castle, but this the young lady positively refused to consent to. Nor did the General himself care particularly about taking her there.

Pomeroy Court was a fine old mansion, with no pretensions to grandeur, but full of that solid comfort which characterizes so many country houses of England. It was irregular in shape, and belonged to different periods; the main building being Elizabethan, from which there projected an addition in that stiff Dutch style which William and Mary introduced. A wide, well-timbered park surrounded it, beyond which lay the village of Pomeroy.

One morning in June, 1856, a man came up the avenue and entered the hall. He was of medium size, with short light hair, low brow, light eyes, and thin face, and he carried a scroll of music in his hand. He entered the hall with the air of an habitué, and proceeded to the south parlor. Here his attention was at once arrested by a figure standing by one of the windows. It was a young girl, slender and graceful in form, dressed in black, with masses of heavy black hair coiled up behind her head. Her back was turned toward him, and he stood in silence for some time looking toward her.

At last he spoke: "Miss Krieff—"

The one called Miss Krieff turned and said, in an indifferent monotone: "Good-morning, Mr. Gualtier."

Turning thus she showed a face which had in it nothing whatever of the English type—a dark olive complexion, almost swarthy, in fact; thick, luxuriant black hair, eyes intensely black and piercingly lustrous, retreating chin, and retreating narrow forehead. In that face, with its intense eyes, there was the possibility of rare charm and fascination, and beauty of a very unusual kind; but at the present moment, as she looked carelessly and almost sullenly at her visitor, there was something repellent.

"Where is Miss Pomeroy?" asked Gualtier.

"About, somewhere," answered Miss Krieff, shortly.

"Will she not play to-day?"

"I think not."

"Why?"

"The usual cause."

"What?"

"Tantrums," said Miss Krieff.

"It is a pity," said Gualtier, dryly, "that she is so irregular in her lessons. She will never advance."

"The idea of her ever pretending to take lessons of any body in any thing is absurd," said Miss Krieff. "Besides, it is as much as a teacher's life is worth. You will certainly leave the house some day with a broken head."

Gualtier smiled, showing a set of large yellow teeth, and his small light eyes twinkled.

"It is nothing for me, but I sometimes think it must be hard for you, Miss Krieff," said he, insinuatingly.

"Hard!" she repeated, and her eyes flashed as she glanced at Gualtier; but in an instant it passed, and she answered in a soft, stealthy voice: "Oh yes, it is hard sometimes; but then dependents have no right to complain of the whims of their superiors and benefactors, you know."

Gualtier said nothing, but seemed to wait further disclosures. After a time Miss Krieff looked up, and surveyed him with her penetrating gaze.

"You must have a great deal to bear, I think," said he at last.

"Have you observed it?" she asked.

"Am I not Miss Pomeroy's tutor? How can I help observing it?" was the reply.

"Have I ever acted as though I was dissatisfied or discontented, or did you ever see any thing in me which would lead you to suppose that I was otherwise than contented?"

"You are generally regarded as a model of good-nature," said Gualtier, in a cautious, non-committal tone. "Why should I think otherwise? They say that no one but you could live with Miss Pomeroy."

Miss Krieff looked away, and a stealthy smile crept over her features.

"Good-nature!" she murmured. A laugh that sounded almost like a sob escaped her. Silence followed, and Gualtier sat looking abstractedly at his sheet of music.

"How do you like the General?" he asked, abruptly.

"How could I help loving Miss Pomeroy's father?" replied Miss Krieff, with the old stealthy smile reappearing.

"Is he not just and honorable?"

"Both—more too—he is generous and tender. He is above all a fond father; so fond," she added, with something like a sneer, "that all his justice, his tenderness, and his generosity are exerted for the exclusive benefit of that darling child on whom he dotes. I assure you, you can have no idea how touching it is to see them together."

"Do you often feel this tenderness toward them?" asked Gualtier, turning his thin sallow face toward her.

"Always," said Miss Krieff, slowly. She rose from her chair, where she had taken her seat, and looked fixedly at him for some time without one word.

"You appear to be interested in this family," said she at length. Gualtier looked at her for a moment—then his eyes fell.

"How can I be otherwise than interested in one like you?" he murmured.

"The General befriended you. He found you in London, and offered you a large salary to teach his daughter."

"The General was very kind, and is so still."

Miss Krieff paused, and looked at him with keen and vigilant scrutiny.

"Would you be shocked," she asked at length, "if you were to hear that the General had an enemy?"

"That would altogether depend upon who the enemy might be."

"An enemy," continued Miss Krieff, with intense bitterness of tone—"in his own family?"

"That would be strange," said Gualtier; "but I can imagine an enemy with whom I would not be offended."

"What would you think," asked Miss Krieff, after another pause, during which her keen scrutinizing gaze was fixed on Gualtier, "if that enemy had been on the watch, and under a mask of good-nature had concealed the most [illegible] feelings? What would you say if that enemy's hate was so malignant that only one thing was wanted, and that was to do some injury in some way to General Pomeroy?"

"You must tell me more," said Gualtier, "before I answer. I am fully capable of understanding all that hate may desire or accomplish. But has this enemy of whom you speak *done* any thing? Has she found out any thing? Has she ever discovered any way in which her hate may be gratified?"

"You seem to take it for granted that his enemy is a woman!"

"Of course."

"Well, then, I will answer you. She *has* found out something—or, rather, she is in the way toward finding out something—which may yet enable her to gratify her desires."

"Have you any objections to tell what that may be?" asked Gualtier.

Miss Krieff said nothing for some time, during which each looked earnestly at the other.

"No," said she at last.

"What is it?"

"It is something that I have found among the General's papers," said she, in a low voice.

"You have examined the General's papers, then?"

"What I said implied that much, I believe," said Miss Krieff, coolly.

"And what is it?"

"A certain mysterious document."

"Mysterious document?" repeated Gualtier.

"Yes."

"What?"

"It is a writing in cipher."

"And you have made it out?"

"No, I have not."

"Of what use is it, then?"

"I think it may be of some importance, or it would not have been kept where it was, and it would not have been written in cipher."

"What can you do with it?" asked Gualtier, after some silence.

"I do not yet see what I can do with it, but others may."

"What others?"

"I hope to find some friend who may have more skill in cryptography than I have, and may be able to decipher it."

"Can you not decipher it at all?"

"Only in part."

"And what is it that you have found out?"

"I will tell you some other time, perhaps."

"You object to tell me now?"

"Yes."

"When will you tell me?"

"When we are better acquainted."

"Are we not pretty well acquainted now?"

"Not so well as I hope we shall be hereafter."

"I shall wait most patiently, then," said Gualtier, earnestly, "till our [illegible] they shall give me some more [illegible] But might you not give me some general idea of that which you think you have discovered?"

Miss Krieff hesitated.

"Do not let me force myself into your confidence," said Gualtier.

"No," said Miss Krieff, in that cold, repellent manner which she could so easily assume. "There is no danger of that. But I have no objection to tell you what seems to me to be the general meaning of that which I have deciphered."

"What is it?"

"As far as I can see," said Miss Krieff, "it charges General Pomeroy with atrocious crimes, and implicates him in one in particular, the knowledge of which, if it be really so, can be used against him with terrible—yes, fatal effect. I now can understand very easily why he was so strangely and frantically eager to betroth his child to the son of Lord Chetwynde—why he trampled on all decency, and bound his own daughter, little more

than a baby, to a stranger—why he purchased Guy Molyneux, body and soul, for money. All is plain from this. But, after all, it is a puzzle. He makes so high a profession of honor that if his profession were real he would have thought of a betrothal any where except *there*. Oh, if Lord Chetwynde only had the faintest conception of this!"

"But what is it?" cried Gualtier, with eager curiosity, which was stimulated to the utmost by Miss Krieff's words and tones.

"I will tell you some other time," said Miss Krieff, resuming her repellent tone—"not now. If I find you worthy of my confidence, I will give it to you."

"I will try to show myself worthy of it," said Gualtier, and, after a time, took his departure, leaving Miss Krieff to her thoughts.

Now, who was this Miss Krieff? She was an important member of the numerous household which the General had brought with him from India. She had been under his guardianship since her infancy; who she was no one knew but the General himself. Her position was an honorable one, and the General always treated her with a respect and affection that were almost paternal. Thus her life had been passed, first as playmate to Zillah, whom she exceeded in age by about four years, and afterward as companion, friend, almost sister, to the spoiled child and wayward heiress.

Hilda Krieff was a person of no common character. Even in India her nature had exhibited remarkable traits. Child as she then was, her astuteness and self-control were such as might have excited the admiration of Macchiavelli himself. By persistent flattery, by the indulgence of every whim, and, above all, by the most exaggerated protestations of devotion, she had obtained a powerful influence over Zillah's uncontrolled but loving nature; and thus she had gradually made herself so indispensable to her that Zillah could never bear to be separated from one who so humored all her whims, and bore her most ungovernable fits of passion with such unvarying sweetness. Hilda had evidently taken her lesson from the General himself; and thus Zillah was treated with equal servility by her father and her friend.

Personally, there was some general resemblance between the two girls; though in Hilda the sallow hue of ill health was replaced by a clear olive complexion; and her eyes, which she seldom raised, had a somewhat furtive manner at times, which was altogether absent from Zillah's clear frank gaze. Hilda's voice was low and melodious, never even in the abandon of childish play, or in any excitement, had she been known to raise its tones; her step was soft and noiseless, and one had no idea that she was in the room till she was found standing by one's side.

Zillah's maid Sarah described in her own way the characteristics of Hilda Krieff.

"That Injun girl," she said, "always giv her a turn. For her part she preferred Missy, who, though she did kick uncommon, and were awful cantankerous to manage, was always ready to make it up, and say as she had been naughty. For my part," concluded Sarah, "I am free to confess I have often giv Missy a sly shake when she was in one of them tantrums, and I got the chance, and however that girl can be always meek spoken even when she has books a-shied at her head is more than I can tell, and I don't like it neither. I see a look in them eyes of hers sometimes as I don't like."

Thus we see that Hilda's Christian-like forgiveness of injuries met with but little appreciation in some quarters. But this mattered little, since with the General and Zillah she was always in the highest favor.

What had these years that had passed done for Zillah? In personal appearance not very much. The plain sickly child had developed into a tall ungainly girl, whose legs and arms appeared incessantly to present to their owner the insoluble problem—What is to be done with us? Her face was still thin and sallow, although it was redeemed by its magnificent eyes and wealth of lustrous, jet-black hair. As to her hair, to tell the truth, she managed its luxuriant folds in a manner as little ornamental as possible. She would never consent to allow it to be dressed, affirming that it would drive her mad to sit still so long, and it was accordingly tricked up with more regard to expedition than to neatness; and long untidy locks might generally be seen straggling over her shoulders. Nevertheless a mind possessed of lively imagination and great faith might have traced in this girl the possibility of better things.

In mental acquirements she was lamentably deficient. Her mind was a garden gone to waste; the weeds flourished, but the good seed refused to take root. It had been found almost impossible to give her even the rudiments of a good education. Governess after governess had come to Pomeroy Court; governess after governess after a short trial had left, each one telling the same story: Miss Pomeroy's abilities were good, even above the average, but her disinclination to learning was so great—such was the delicately expressed formula in which they made known to the General Zillah's utter idleness and selfishness—that she (the governess) felt that she was unable to do her justice; that possibly the fault lay in her own method of imparting instruction, and that she therefore begged to resign the position of Miss Pomeroy's instructress. Now, as each new teacher had begun a system of her own which she had not had time to develop, it may be easily seen that the little knowledge which Zillah possessed was of the most desultory character. Yet after all she had something in her favor. She had a taste for reading, and this led her to a familiarity with the best authors. More than this, her father had instilled into her mind a chivalrous sense of honor; and from natural instinct, as well as from his teachings, she loved all that was noble and pure. Medieval romance was most congenial to her taste; and of all the heroes who figure there she loved best the pure, the high-souled, the heavenly Sir Galahad. All the heroes of the Arthurian or of the Carlovingian epopes were adored by this wayward but generous girl. She would sit for hours curled up on a window-sill of the library, reading tales of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, or of Charlemagne and his Paladins. Fairy lore, and whatever else our medieval ancestors have loved, thus became most familiar to her, and all her soul became imbued with these bright and radiant fancies. And through it all she learned the one great lesson

which these romances teach—that the grandest and most heroic of all virtues is self-abnegation at the call of honor and loyalty.

The only trouble was, Zillah took too grand a view of this virtue to make it practically useful in daily life. If she had thus taken it to her heart, it might have made her practice it by giving up her will to those around her, and by showing from day to day the beauty of gentleness and courtesy. This, however, she never thought of; or, if it came to her mind, she considered it quite beneath her notice. Hers was simply a grand theory, to carry out which she never dreamed of any sacrifice but one of the grandest character.

The General certainly did all in his power to induce her to learn; and if she did not, it was scarcely his fault. But, while Zillah thus grew up in ignorance, there was one who did profit by the instructions which she had despised, and, in spite of the constant change of teachers which Zillah's impracticable character had rendered necessary, was now, at the age of nineteen, a refined, well-educated, and highly-accomplished young lady. This was Hilda Krieff. General Pomeroy was anxious that she should have every possible advantage, and Zillah was glad enough to have a companion in her studies. The result is easily stated. Zillah was idle, Hilda was studious, and all that the teachers could impart was diligently mastered by her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET CIPHER.

Some time passed away, and Gualtier made his usual visits. Zillah's moods were variable and capricious. Sometimes she would languidly declare that she could not take her lesson; at other times she would take it for about ten minutes; and then, rising hastily from the piano, she would insist that she was tired, and refuse to study any more for that day. Once or twice, by an extreme effort, she managed to devote a whole half hour, and then, as though such exertion was superhuman, she would retire, and for several weeks afterward plead that half hour as an excuse for her negligence. All this Gualtier bore with perfect equanimity. Hilda said nothing; and generally, after Zillah's retirement, she would go to the piano herself and take a lesson.

These lessons were diversified by general conversation. Often they spoke about Zillah, but very seldom was it that they went beyond this. Miss Krieff showed no desire to speak of the subject which they once had touched upon, and Gualtier was too cunning to be obtrusive. So the weeks passed by without any renewal of that confidential conversation in which they had once indulged.

While Zillah was present, Hilda never in any instance showed any sign whatever of anger or impatience. She seemed not to notice her behavior, or if she did notice it she seemed to think it a very ordinary matter. On Zillah's retiring she generally took her place at the piano without a word, and Gualtier began his instructions. It was during these instructions that their conversation generally took place.

One day Gualtier came and found Hilda alone. She was somewhat *distrait*, but showed pleasure at seeing him, at which he felt both gratified and flattered. "Where is Miss Pomeroy?" he asked, after the usual greetings had been exchanged.

"You will not have the pleasure of seeing her to-day," answered Hilda, dryly.

"Is she ill?"

"Ill? She is never ill. No. She has gone out."

"Ah?"

"The General was going to take a drive to visit a friend, and she took it into her head to accompany him. Of course he had to take her. It was very inconvenient—and very ridiculous—but the moment she proposed it he assented, with only a very faint effort at dissuasion. So they have gone, and will not be back for some hours."

"I hope you will allow me to say," remarked Gualtier, in a low voice, "that I consider her absence rather an advantage than otherwise."

"You could hardly feel otherwise," said Hilda. "You have not yet got a broken head, it is true; but it is coming. Some day you will not walk out of the house. You will be carried out."

"You speak bitterly."

"I feel bitterly."

"Has any thing new happened?" he asked, following up the advantage which her confession gave him.

"No; it is the old story. Interminable troubles, which have to be borne with interminable patience."

There was a long silence. "You spoke once," said Gualtier at last, in a low tone, "of something which you promised one day to tell me—some papers. You said that you would show them some day when we were better acquainted. Are we not better acquainted? You have seen me now for many weeks since that time, and ought to know whether I am worthy to be trusted or not."

"Mr. Gualtier," said Hilda, frankly, and without hesitation, "from my point of view I have concluded that you are worthy to be trusted. I have decided to show you the paper."

Gualtier began to murmur his thanks. Hilda waved her hand. "There is no need of that," said she. "It may not amount to any thing, and then your thanks will be thrown away. If it does amount to something you will share the benefit of it with me—though you can not share the revenge," she muttered, in a lower tone. "But, after all," she continued, "I do not know that any thing can be gained by it. The conjectures which I have formed may all be unfounded."

"At any rate, I shall be able to see what the foundation is," said Gualtier.

"True," returned Hilda, rising; "and so I will go at once and get the paper."

"Have you kept it ever since?" he asked.

"What! the paper? Oh, you must not imagine that I have kept the original! No, no. I kept it long enough to make a copy, and returned the original to its place."

"Where did you find it?"

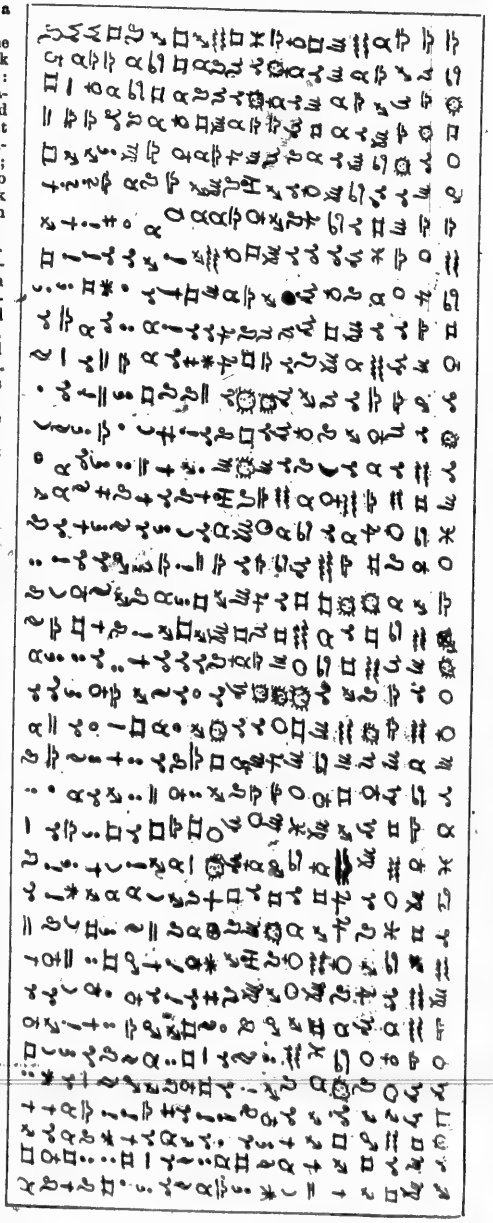
"In the General's private desk."

"Did it seem to be a paper of any importance?"

"Yes; it was kept by itself in a secret drawer. That showed its importance."

Hilda then left the room, and in a short time returned with a paper in her hand.

"Here it is," she said, and she gave it to Gualtier. Gualtier took it, and unfolding it, he saw this:



Gualtier took this singular paper, and examined it long and earnestly. Hilda had copied out the characters with painful minuteness and beautiful accuracy; but nothing in it suggested to him any revelation of its dark meaning, and he put it down with a strange, bewildered air.

"What is it all?" he asked.

"It seems to contain some mystery, beyond a doubt. I can gather nothing from the characters. They are all astronomical signs; and, so far as I can see, are the signs of the zodiac and of the planets. Here, said he, pointing to the character ☉, is the sign of the Sun; and here, pointing to ♎, is Libra; and here is Aries, pointing to the sign ♈.

"Yes," said Hilda; "and that occurs most frequently."

"What is it all?"

"I take it to be a secret cipher."

"How?"

"Why, this—that these signs are only used to represent letters of the alphabet. If such a simple mode of concealment has been used the solution is an easy one."

"Can you solve cipher alphabets?"

"Yes, where there is nothing more than a concealment of the letters. Where there is any approach to hieroglyphic writing, or syllabic ciphers, I am baffled."

"And have you solved this?"

"No."

"I thought you said that you had, and that it contained charges against General Pomeroy."

"That is my difficulty. I have tried the usual tests, and have made out several lines; but there is something about it which puzzles me; and though I have worked at it for nearly a year, I have not been able to get to the bottom of it."

"Are you sure that your deciphering is correct?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because it ought to apply to all, and it does not. It only applies to a quarter of it."

"Perhaps it is all hieroglyphic, or syllabic writing."

"Perhaps so."

"In that case can you solve it?"

"No; and that is one reason

"'WHAT IS IT ALL?' HE ASKED."

why I have thought of you. Have you ever tried any thing of the kind?"

"No; never. And I don't see how you have learned any thing about it, or how you have been able to arrive at any principle of action."

"Oh, as to that," returned Hilda, "the principle upon which I work is very simple; but I wish you to try the solution with your own unaided ingenuity. So, simple as my plan is, I will not tell you any thing about it just now."

Gualtier looked again at the paper with an expression of deep perplexity.

"How am I even to begin?" said he. "What am I to do? You might as well ask me to trans-

tion with your own un-
mple as my plan is, I will
bout it just now."
at the paper with an ex-
ity.
egin?" said he. "What
as well ask me to trans-

late the Peschito version of the Syriac gospels, or the Rig-Veda."

"I think," said Hilda, coolly, "that you have sufficient ingenuity."

"I have," said Gualtier; "but, unfortunately, my ingenuity does not lie at all in this direction. This is something different from any thing that has ever come in my way before. See," he said, pointing to the paper, "this solid mass of letters. It is a perfect block, an exact rectangle. How do you know where to begin? Nothing on the letters shows this. How do you know whether you are to read from left to right, or from right to left, like Hebrew and Arabic; or both ways, like the old Greek Boustrephedon; or vertically, like the Chinese; or, for that matter, diagonally? Why, one doesn't know even how to begin!"

"That must all be carefully considered," said Hilda. "I have weighed it all, and know every letter by heart; its shape, its position, and all about it."

"Well," said Gualtier, "you must not be at all surprised if I fail utterly."

"At least you will try?"

"Try? I shall be only too happy. I shall devote to this all the time that I have. I will give up all my mind and all my soul to it. I will not only examine it while I am by myself, but I will carry this paper with me wherever I go, and occupy every spare moment in studying it. I'll learn every character by heart, and think over them all day, and dream about them all night. Do not be afraid that I shall neglect it. It is enough for me that *you* have given this for me to attempt its solution."

Gualtier spoke with earnestness and impetuosity, but Hilda did not seem to notice it at all.

"Recollect," she said, in her usual cool manner, "it is as much for your interest as for mine. If my conjecture is right, it may be of the utmost value. If I am wrong, then I do not know what to do."

"You think that this implicates General Pomeroy in some crime?"

"That is my impression, from my own attempt at solving it. But, as I said, my solution is only a partial one. I can not fathom the rest of it, and do not know how to begin to do so. That is the reason why I want your help."

CHAPTER VIII.

DECIPHERING.

MANY weeks passed away before Gualtier had another opportunity of having a confidential conversation with Miss Krieff. Zillah seemed to be perverse. She was as capricious as ever as to her music: some days attending to it for five minutes, other days half an hour; but now she did not choose to leave the room. She would quit the piano, and, flinging herself into a chair, declare that she wanted to see how Hilda stood it. As Hilda seated herself and wrought out elaborate combinations from the instrument, she would listen attentively, and when it was over she would give expression to some despairing words as to her own stupidity.

Yet Gualtier had opportunities, and he was not slow to avail himself of them. Confidential intercourse had arisen between himself and Miss Krieff, and he was determined to avail himself of the great advantage which this gave him. They had a secret in common—she had admitted him to her intimacy. There was an understanding between them. Each felt an interest in the other. Gualtier knew that he was more than an ordinary music-teacher to her.

During those days when Zillah persistently staid in the room he made opportunities for himself. Standing behind her at the piano he had chances of speaking words which Zillah could not hear.

Thus: "Your fingering there is not correct, Miss Krieff," he would say in a low tone. "You must put the second finger on G. I have not yet deciphered it."

"But the book indicates the third finger on G. Have you tried?"

"It is a blunder of the printer. Yes, every day—almost every hour of every day."

"Yet it seems to me to be natural to put the third finger there. Are you discouraged?"

"Try the second finger once or twice, this way;" and he played a few notes. "Discouraged? no; I am willing to keep at it for an indefinite period."

"Yes, I see that it is better. You must succeed. I was three months at it before I discovered any thing."

"That passage is *allegro*, and you played it *andante*. I wish you would give me a faint hint as to the way in which you deciphered it."

"I did not notice the directions," responded Miss Krieff, playing the passage over again. "Will that do? No, I will give no hint. You would only imitate me then, and I wish you to find out for yourself on your own principle."

"Yes, that is much better. But I have no principle to start on, and have not yet found out even how to begin."

"I must pay more attention to 'expression,' I see. You say my 'time' is correct enough. If you are not discouraged, you will find it out yet."

"Your 'time' is perfect. If it is possible, I will find it out. I am not discouraged."

"Well, I will hope for something better the next time, and now don't speak about it any more. The 'brat' is listening."

"*Allegro, allegro*; remember, Miss Krieff. You always confound *andante* with *allegro*."

"So I do. They have the same initials."

Such was the nature of Gualtier's musical instructions. These communications, however, were brief and hurried, and only served to deepen the intimacy between them. They had now mutually recognized themselves as two conspirators, and had thus become already indispensable to one another.

They waited patiently, however, and at length their patient waiting was rewarded. One day Gualtier came and found that Zillah was unwell, and confined to her room. It was the slightest thing in the world, but the General was anxious and fidgety, and was staying in the room with her trying to amuse her. This Miss Krieff told him with her usual bitterness.

"And now," said she, "we will have an hour. I want to know what you have done."

"Done! Nothing."

"Nothing?"

"No, nothing. My genius does not lie in

that direction. You might as well have expected me to decipher a Ninevite inscription. I can do nothing."

"Have you tried?"

"Tried! I assure you that for the last month the only thing that I have thought of has been this. Many reasons have urged me to decipher it, but the chief motive was the hope of bringing to you a complete explanation."

"Have you not made out at least a part of it?"

"Not a part—not a single word—if there are words in it—which I very much doubt."

"Why should you doubt it?"

"It seems to me that it must consist of hieroglyphics. You yourself say that you have only made out a part of it, and that you doubt whether it is a valid interpretation. After all, then, your interpretation is only partial—only a conjecture. Now I have not begun to make even a conjecture. For see—what is this?" and Gualtier drew the well-thumbed paper from his pocket. "I have counted up all the different characters here, and find that they are forty in number. They are composed chiefly of astronomical signs; but sixteen of them are the ordinary punctuation marks, such as one sees every day. If it were merely a secret alphabet, there would be twenty-six signs only, not forty. What can one do with forty signs?

"I have examined different grammars of foreign languages to see if any of them had forty letters, but among the few books at my command I can find none; and even if it were so, what then? What would be the use of trying to decipher an inscription in Arabic? I thought at one time that perhaps the writer might have adopted the short-hand alphabet, but changed the signs. Yet even when I go from this principle I can do nothing."

"Then you give it up altogether?"

"Yes, altogether and utterly, so far as I am concerned; but I still am anxious to know what you have deciphered, and how you have deciphered it. I have a hope that I may gain some light from your discovery, and thus be able to do something myself."

"Well," said Miss Krieff, "I will tell you, since you have failed so completely. My principle is a simple one; and my deciphering, though only partial, seems to me to be so true, as far as it goes, that I can not imagine how any other result can be found.

"I am aware," she continued, "that there are forty different characters in the inscription. I counted them all out, and wrote them out most carefully. I went on the simple principle that the writer had written in English, and that the number of the letters might be disregarded on a first examination.

"Then I examined the number of times in which each letter occurred. I found that the sign ☿ occurred most frequently. Next was ☊; next ☌; and then ☍, and ☾, and ☁, and ☄, and ☽." Miss Krieff marked these signs down as she spoke.

Gualtier nodded.

"There was this peculiarity about these signs," said Miss Krieff, "that they occurred all through the writing, while the others occurred some in the first half and some in the second. For this inscription is very peculiar in this respect. It is only in the second half that the signs of punctuation occur. The signs of the first half are all astronomical.

"You must remember," continued Miss Krieff, "that I did not think of any other language than the English. The idea of its being any dialect of the Hindustani never entered my head. So I went on this foundation, and naturally the first thought that came to me was, what letters are there in English which occur most frequently? It seemed to me if I could find this out I might obtain some key, partially, at any rate, to the letters which occurred so frequently in this writing.

"I had plenty of time and unlimited patience. I took a large number of different books, written by standard authors, and counted the letters on several pages of each as they occurred. I think I counted more than two hundred pages in this way. I began with the vowels, and counted up the number of times each one occurred. Then I counted the consonants."

"That never occurred to me," said Gualtier. "Why did you not tell me?"

"Because I wanted you to decipher it yourself on your own principle. Of what use would it be if you only followed over my track? You would then have come only to my result. But I must tell you the result of my examination. After counting up the recurrence of all the letters on more than two hundred pages of standard authors, I made out an average of the times of their recurrence, and I have the paper here on which I wrote the average down."

And Miss Krieff drew from her pocket a paper which she unfolded and showed to Gualtier.

On it was the following:

AVERAGE OF LETTERS.

E.....222	times per page.	N.....90	times per page.
T.....162	" " "	L.....62	" " "
A.....120	" " "	D.....46	" " "
H.....110	" " "	C.....42	" " "
I. J....109	" " "	U. V...36	" " "
S.....104	" " "	B.....30	" " "
O.....100	" " "	W.....30	" " "
R.....100	" " "	G.....30	" " "

"The rest," said Miss Krieff, "occur on the average less than thirty times on a page, and so I did not mark them. 'F,' 'P,' and 'K' may be supposed to occur more frequently than some others; but they do not.

"'E,' then," she continued, "is the letter of first importance in the English language. 'A,' and 'T,' and 'H,' are the next ones. Now there are some little words which include these letters, such as 'the.' 'And' is another word which may be discovered and deciphered, it is of such frequent occurrence. If these words only can be found, it is a sign at least that one is on the right track. There are also terminations which seem to me peculiar to the English language; such as 'ng,' 'ing,' 'ed,' 'ly,' and so on. At any rate, from my studies of the Italian, French, and German, and from my knowledge of Hindustani, I know that there are no such terminations in any of the words of those languages. So you see," concluded Miss Krieff, with a quiet smile, "the simple principle on which I acted."

"Your genius is marvelously acute!" exclaimed Gualtier, in undisguised admiration. "You speak of your principle as a *simple* one, but it is more than I have been able to arrive at."

"Men," said Miss Krieff, "reason too much.

You have been imagining all sorts of languages in which this may have been written. Now, women go by intuitions. I acted in that way."

"Intuitions!" exclaimed Gualtier. "You have reasoned out this thing in a way which might have done honor to Bacon. You have laid down a great principle as a foundation, and have gone earnestly to work building up your theory. Champollion himself did not surpass you."

Gualtier's tone expressed profound admiration. It was not idle compliment. It was sincere. He looked upon her at that moment as a superior genius. His intellect bowed before hers. Miss Krieff saw the ascendency which she had gained over him; and his expressions of admiration were not unwelcome. Admiration! Rare, indeed, was it that she had heard any expressions of that kind, and when they came they were as welcome as is the water to the parched and thirsty ground. Her whole manner softened toward him, and her eyes, which were usually so bright and hard, now grew softer, though none the less bright.

"You overestimate what I have done," said she, "and you forget that it is only partially effected."

"Whether partially or not," replied Gualtier, "I have the most intense curiosity to see what you have done. Have you any objections to show it to me? Now that I have failed by myself, the only hope that I have is to be able to succeed through your assistance. You can show your superiority to me here; perhaps, in other things, I may be of service to you."

"I have no objections," said Miss Krieff. "Indeed I would rather show you my results than not, so as to hear what you have to say about them. I am not at all satisfied, for it is only partial. I know what you will say. You will see several reasons, all of which are very good, for doubting my interpretation of this writing."

"I can assure you that I shall doubt nothing. After my own disgraceful failure any interpretation will seem to me to be a work of genius. Believe me any interpretation of yours will only fill me with a sense of my own weakness."

"Well," said Miss Krieff, after a pause, "I will show you what I have done. My papers are in my room. Go and play on the piano till I come back."

Saying this she departed, and was absent for about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, and then returned.

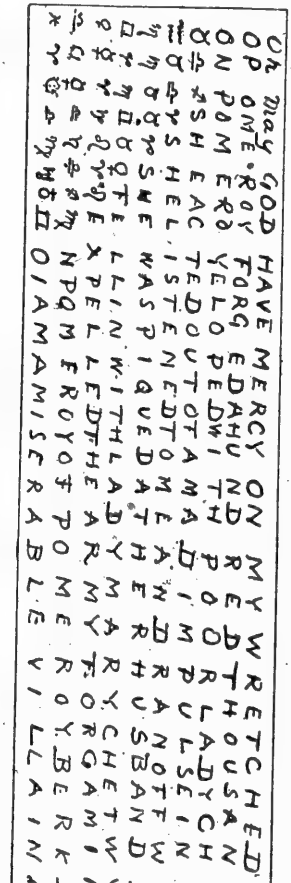
"How is Miss Pomeroy?" asked Gualtier, turning round on the piano-stool and rising.

"About the same," said Miss Krieff. "The General is reading Puss in Boots to her, I believe. Perhaps it is Jack and the Bean Stalk, or Beauty and the Beast. It is one of them, however. I am not certain which."

She walked up to a centre-table and opened a paper which she held in her hand. Gualtier followed her, and took a seat by her side.

"You must remember," said Miss Krieff, "that this interpretation of mine is only a partial one, and may be altogether wrong. Yet the revelations which it seemed to convey were so startling that they have produced a very deep impression on my mind. I hoped that you would have done something. If you had arrived at a solution similar to mine, even if it had been a partial one, I should have been satisfied that I had arrived at a part of the truth at least. As you have not done so, nothing remains but to show you what I have done."

Saying this, she opened the paper which she held and displayed it to Gualtier:



"In that writing," said she, "there are twenty lines. I have been able to do any thing with ten of them only, and that partially. The rest is beyond my conjecture."

The paper was written so as to show under each character the corresponding letter, or what Miss Krieff supposed to be the corresponding letter, to each sign.

"This," said Miss Krieff, "is about half of the signs. You see if my key is applied it makes intelligible English out of most of the signs in this first half. There seems to me to be a block of letters set into a mass of characters. Those triangular portions of signs at each end, and all the lower part, seem to me to be merely a mass of characters that mean nothing, but added to conceal and distract."

"It is possible," said Gualtier, carefully examining the paper.

"It must mean something," said Miss Krieff, "and it can mean nothing else than what I have written. That is what it was intended to express. Those letters could not have tumbled into that position by accident, so as to make up these words. See," she continued, "here are these sentences written out separately, and you can read them more conveniently."

She handed Gualtier a piece of paper, on which was the following:

Oh may God have mercy on my wretched soul. Amen
O Pomeroy forged a hundred thousand dollars
O N Pomeroy eloped with poor Lady Chetwynde
She acted out of a mad impulse in flying
She listened to me and ran off with me
She was piqued at her husband's act
Fell in with Lady Mary Chetwynd
Expelled the army for gaming
N Pomeroy of Pomeroy Berks
O I am a miserable villain

Gualtier read it long and thoughtfully.

"What are the initials 'O. N.?'"

"Otto Neville. It is the General's name."

Silence followed. "Here he is called O Pomeroy, O N Pomeroy, and N Pomeroy."

"Yes; the name by which he is called is Neville."

"Your idea is that it is a confession of guilt, written by this O. N. Pomeroy himself?"

"It reads so."

"I don't want to inquire into the probability of the General's writing out this and leaving it in his drawer, even in cipher, but I look only at the paper itself."

"What do you think of it?"

"In the first place your interpretation is very ingenious."

"But—?"

"But it seems partial."

"So it does to me. That is the reason why I want your help. You see that there are several things about it which give it an incomplete character. First, the mixture of initials; then, the interchange of the first and third persons. At one moment the writer speaking of Pomeroy as a third person, running off with Lady Chetwynde, and again saying he himself fell in with her. Then there are incomplete sentences, such as, 'Fell in with Lady Mary Chetwynde—'"

"I know all that, but I have two ways of accounting for it."

"What?"

"First, that the writer became confused in writing the cipher characters and made mistakes."

"That is probable," said Gualtier. "What is another way?"

"That he wrote it this way on purpose to baffle."

"I think the first idea is the best: if he had wished to baffle he never would have written it at all."

"No; but somebody else might have written it in his name thus secretly and guardedly. Some one who wished for vengeance, and tried this way."

Gualtier said nothing in reply, but looked earnestly at Miss Krieff.

CHAPTER IX.

A SERIOUS ACCIDENT.

About this time an event took place which caused a total change in the lives of all at Pomeroy Court. One day, when out hunting, General Pomeroy met with an accident of a very serious nature. While leaping over a hedge the horse slipped and threw his rider, falling heavily on him at the same time. He was picked up bleeding and senseless, and in that condition carried home. On seeing her father thus brought back, Zillah gave way to a perfect frenzy of grief. She threw herself upon his unconscious form, uttering wild ejaculations, and it was with extreme difficulty that she could be taken away long enough to allow the General to be undressed and laid on his bed. She then took her place by her father's bedside, where she remained without food or sleep for two or three days, refusing all entreaties to leave him. A doctor had been sent for with all speed, and on his arrival did what he could for the senseless sufferer. It was a very serious case,

and it was not till the third day that the General opened his eyes. The first sight that he saw was the pale and haggard face of his daughter.

"What is this?" he murmured, confusedly, and in a faint voice. "What are you doing here, my darling?"

At the sight of this recognition, and the sound of his voice, Zillah uttered a loud cry of joy, and twined her arms about him in an eager hunger of affection.

"Oh, papa! papa!" she moaned, "you are getting better! You will not leave me—you will not—you will not!"

All that day the doctor had been in the house, and at this moment had been waiting in an adjoining apartment. The cry of Zillah startled him, and he hurried into the room. He saw her prostrate on the bed, with her arms around her father, uttering low, half-hysterical words of fondness, intermingled with laughter and weeping.

"Miss Pomeroy," he said, with some sternness, "are you mad? Did I not warn you above all things to restrain your feelings?"

Instantly Zillah started up. The reproof of the doctor had so stung her that for a moment she forgot her father, and regarded her reprover with a face full of astonishment and anger.

"How dare you speak so to me?" she cried, savagely.

The doctor looked fixedly at her for a few moments, and then answered, quietly:

"This is no place for discussion. I will explain afterward." He then went to the General's bedside, and surveyed his patient in thoughtful silence. Already the feeble beginnings of returning consciousness had faded away, and the sick man's eyes were closed wearily. The doctor administered some medicine, and after waiting for nearly an hour in silence, he saw the General sink off into a peaceful sleep.

"Now," said he, in a low voice, "Miss Pomeroy, I wish to say something to you. Come with me." He led the way to the room where he had been waiting, while Zillah, for the first time in her life, obeyed an order. She followed in silence.

"Miss Pomeroy," said the doctor, very gravely, "your father's case is very serious indeed, and I want to have a perfect understanding with you. If you have not thorough confidence in me, you have only to say so, and I will give you a list of physicians of good standing, into whose hands you may safely confide the General. But if, on the contrary, you wish me to continue my charge, I will only do so on the condition that I am to be the sole master in that room, and that my injunctions are to be implicitly attended to. Now, choose for yourself."

This grave, stern address, and the idea that he might leave her, frightened Zillah altogether out of her passion. She looked piteously at him, and grasped his hand as if in fear that he would instantly carry out his threat.

"Oh, doctor!" she cried, "pray forgive me; do not leave me when dear papa is so ill! It shall be all as you say, only you will not send me away from him, will you? Oh, say that you will not!"

The doctor retained her hand, and answered very kindly: "My dear child, I should be most sorry to do so. Now that your father has come back to consciousness, you may be the greatest possible comfort to him if you will. But, to do this, you really must try to control yourself. The excitement which you have just caused him has overcome him, and if I had not been here I do not know what might have happened. Remember, my child, that love is shown not by words but by deeds; and it would be but a poor return for all your father's affection to give way selfishly to your own grief."

"Oh, what have I done?" cried Zillah, in terror.

"I do not suppose that you have done him very serious injury," said the doctor, reassuringly; "but you ought to take warning by this. You will promise now, won't you, that there shall be no repetition of this conduct?"

"Oh, I will! I will!"

"I will trust you, then," said the doctor, looking with pity upon her sad face. "You are his best nurse, if you only keep your promise. So now, my dear, go back to your place by his side." And Zillah, with a faint murmur of thanks, went back again.

On the following day General Pomeroy seemed to have regained his full consciousness. Zillah exercised a strong control over herself, and was true to her promise. When the doctor called he seemed pleased at the favorable change. But there was evidently something on the General's mind. Finally, he made the doctor understand that he wished to see him alone. The doctor whispered a few words to Zillah, who instantly left the room.

"Doctor," said the General, in a feeble voice, as soon as they were alone, "I must know the whole truth. Will you tell it to me frankly?"

"I never deceive my patients," was the answer.

"Am I dangerously ill?"

"You are."

"How long have I to live?"

"My dear Sir, God alone can answer that question. You have a chance for life yet. Your sickness may take a favorable turn, and we may be able to bring you around again."

"But the chances are against me, you think?"

"We must be prepared for the worst," said the doctor, solemnly. "At the same time, there is a chance."

"Well, suppose that the turn should be unfavorable, how long would it be, do you think, before the end? I have much to attend to, and it is of the greatest importance that I should know this."

"Probably a month—possibly less," answered the doctor, gravely, after a moment's thought; "that is, if the worst should take place. But it is impossible to speak with certainty until your symptoms are more fully developed."

"Thank you, doctor, for your frankness; and now, will you kindly send my daughter to me?"

"Remember," said the doctor, doubtfully, "that it is of the greatest possible moment that you should be kept free from all excitement. Any agitation of mind will surely destroy your last chance."

"But I must see her!" answered the General, excitedly. "I have to attend to something which concerns her. It is her future. I could not die easily, or rest in my grave, if this were neglected."

Thus far the General had been calm, but the thought of Zillah had roused him into a dangerous agitation. The doctor saw that discussion

would only aggravate this, and that his only chance was to humor his fancies. So he went out, and found Zillah pacing the passage in a state of uncontrollable agitation. He reminded her of her promise, impressed on her the necessity of caution, and sent her to him. She crept softly to the bedside, and, taking her accustomed seat, covered his hand with kisses.

"Sit a little lower, my darling," said the General, "where I may see your face." She obeyed, still holding his hand, which returned with warmth her caressing pressure.

The agitation which the General had felt at the doctor's information had now grown visibly stronger. There was a kind of feverish excitement in his manner which seemed to indicate that his brain was affected. One idea only filled that half-delirious brain, and this, without the slightest warning, he abruptly began to communicate to his daughter.

"You know, Zillah," said he, in a rapid, eager tone which alarmed her, "the dearest wish of my heart is to see you the wife of Guy Molyneux, the son of my old friend. I betrothed you to him five years ago. You remember all about it, of course. He visited us at London. The time for the accomplishment of my desire has now arrived. I received a letter from Lord Chetwynde on the day of my accident, telling me that his son's regiment was shortly to sail for India. I intended writing to ask him to pay us a visit before he left; but now," he added, in a dreamy voice, "of course he must come, and—he must marry you before he goes."

Any thing more horrible, more abhorrent, to Zillah than such language, at such a time, could not be conceived. She thought he was raving. A wild exclamation of fear and remonstrance started to her lips; but she remembered the doctor's warning, and by a mighty effort repressed it. It then seemed to her that this raving delirium, if resisted, might turn to madness and endanger his last chance. In her despair she found only one answer, and that was something which might soothe him.

"Yes, dear papa," she said, quietly; "yes, we will ask him to come and see us."

"No, no," cried the General, with feverish impatience. "That will not do. You must marry him at once—to-day—to-morrow—do you hear? There is no time to lose."

"But I must stay with you, dearest papa, you know," said Zillah, still striving to soothe him. "What would you do without your little girl? I am sure you can not want me to leave you."

"Ah, my child!" said the General, mournfully, "I am going to leave *you*. The doctor tells me that I have but a short time to live; and I feel that what he says is true. If I must leave you, my darling, I can not leave you without a protector."

At this Zillah's unaccustomed self-control gave way utterly. Overcome by the horror of that revelation and the anguish of that discovery, she flung her arms around him and clung to him passionately.

"You shall not go!" she moaned. "You shall not go; or if you do you must take me with you. I can not live without you. You know that I can not. Oh, papa! papa!"

The tones of her voice, which were wailed out in a wild, despairing cry, reached the ears of the doctor, who at once hurried in.

"What is this?" he said, sharply and sternly, to Zillah. "Is this keeping your promise?"

"Oh, doctor!" said Zillah, imploringly, "I did not mean to—I could not help it—but tell me—it is not true, is it? Tell me that my father is not going to leave me!"

"I will tell you this," said he, gravely. "You are destroying every chance of his recovery by your vehemence."

Zillah looked up at him with an expression of agony on her face such as, accustomed as he was to scenes of suffering, he had but seldom encountered.

"I've killed him, then!" she faltered.

The doctor put his hand kindly on her shoulder. "I trust not, my poor child," said he; "but it is my duty to warn you of the consequences of giving way to excessive grief."

"Oh, doctor! you are quite right, and I will try very hard not to give way again."

During this conversation, which was low and hurried, General Pomeroy lay without hearing any thing of what they were saying. His lips moved, and his hands picked at the bed-clothes convulsively. Only one idea was in his mind—the accomplishment of his wishes. His daughter's grief seemed to have no effect on him whatever. Indeed, he did not appear to notice it.

"Speak to her, doctor," said he, feebly, as he heard their voices. "Tell her I can not die happy unless she is married—I can not leave her alone in the world."

The doctor looked surprised. "What does he mean?" he said, taking Zillah aside. "What is this fancy? Is there any thing in it?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Zillah. "It is certainly on his mind, and he can't be argued or humored out of it. It is an arrangement made some years ago between him and Lord Chetwynde that when I grew up I should marry his son, and he has just been telling me that he wishes it carried out now. Oh! what—what *shall* I do?" she added, despairingly. "Can't you do something, doctor?"

"I will speak to him," said the latter; and, approaching the bed, he bent over the General, and said, in a low voice:

"General Pomeroy, you know that the family physician is often a kind of father-confessor as well. Now I do not wish to intrude upon your private affairs; but from what you have said I perceive that there is something on your mind, and if I can be of any assistance to you I shall be only too happy. Have you any objection to tell me what it is that is troubling you?"

While the doctor spoke the General's eyes were fixed upon Zillah with feverish anxiety. "Tell her," he murmured, "that she must consent at once—at once," he repeated, in a more excited tone.

"Consent to what?"

"To this marriage that I have planned for her. She knows. It is with the son of my old friend, Lord Chetwynde. He is a fine lad, and comes of a good stock. I knew his father before him. I have watched him closely for the last five years. He will take care of her. He will make her a good husband. And I—shall be able to die—in peace. But it must be done—immediately—for he is going—to India."

The General spoke in a very feeble tone, and with frequent pauses.

"And do you wish your daughter to go with him? She is too young to be exposed to the dangers of Indian life."

This idea seemed to strike the General very forcibly. For some minutes he did not answer, and it was with difficulty that he could collect his thoughts. At last he answered, slowly:

"That is true—but she need not accompany him. Let her stay with me—till all is over—then she can go—to Chetwynde. It will be her natural home. She will find in my old friend a second father. She can remain with him—till her husband returns."

A long pause followed. "Besides," he resumed, in a fainter voice, "there are other things. I can not explain—they are private—they concern the affairs of others. But if Zillah were to refuse to marry him—she would lose one-half of her fortune. So you can understand my anxiety. She has not a relative in the world—to whom I could leave her."

Here the General stopped, utterly exhausted by the fatigue of speaking so much. As for the doctor, he sat for a time involved in deep thought. Zillah stood there pale and agitated, looking now at her father and now at the doctor, while a new and deeper anguish came over her heart. After a while he rose and quietly motioned to Zillah to follow him to the adjoining room.

"My dear child," said he, kindly, when they had arrived there, "your father is excited, but yet is quite sane. His plan seems to be one which he has been cherishing for years; and he has so thoroughly set his heart upon it that it now is evidently his sole idea. I do not see what else can be done than to comply with his wishes."

"What!" cried Zillah, aghast.

"To refuse," said the doctor, "might be fatal. It would throw him into a paroxysm."

"Oh, doctor!" moaned Zillah. "What do you mean? You can not be in earnest. What—to do such a thing when darling papa is—is lying!"

Sobs choked her utterance. She buried her face in her hands and sank into a chair.

"He is not yet so bad," said the doctor, earnestly, "but he is certainly in a critical state; and unless it is absolutely impossible—unless it is too abhorrent to think of—unless any calamity is better than this—I would advise you to try and think if you can not bring yourself to—to indulge his wish, wild as it may seem to you. There, my dear, I am deeply sorry for you; but I am honest, and say what I think."

For a long time Zillah sat in silence, struggling with her emotions. The doctor's words impressed her deeply; but the thing which he advised was horrible to her—abhorrent beyond words. But then there was her father lying so near to death—whom, perhaps, her self-sacrifice might save, and whom certainly her selfishness would destroy. She could not hesitate. It was a bitter decision, but she made it. She rose to her feet paler than ever, but quite calm.

"Doctor," said she, "I have decided. It is horrible beyond words; but I will do it, or any thing, for his sake. I would die to save him; and this is something worse than death."

She was calm and cold; her voice seemed unnatural; her eyes were tearless.

"It seems very hard," she murmured, after a pause; "I never saw Captain Molyneux but once, and I was only ten years old."

"How old are you now?" asked the doctor, who knew not what to say to this poor stricken heart.

"Fifteen."

"Poor child!" said he, compassionately; "the trials of life are coming upon you early; but," he added, with a desperate effort at condolence, "do not be so despairing; whatever may be the result, you are, after all, in the path of duty; and that is the safest and the best for us all in the end, however hard it may seem to be in the present."

Just then the General's voice interrupted his little homily, sounding querulously and impatiently: "Zillah! Zillah!"

She sprang to his bedside: "Here I am, dear papa."

"Will you do as I wish?" he asked, abruptly.

"Yes," said Zillah, with an effort at firmness which cost her dear. Saying this, she kissed him; and the beam of pleasure which at this word lighted up the wan face of the sick man touched Zillah to the heart. She felt that, come what might, she had received her reward.

"My sweetest, dutiful child," said the General, tenderly; "you have made me happy, my darling. Now get your desk and write for him at once. You must not lose time, my child."

This unremitting pressure upon her gave Zillah a new struggle, but the General exhibited such feverish impatience that she dared not resist. So she went to a Davenport which stood in the corner of the room, and saying, quietly, "I will write here, papa," she seated herself, with her back toward him.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Yes, papa."

The General then began to dictate to her what she was to write. It was as follows:

"My dear old Friend,—I think it will cause you some grief to hear that our long friendship is about to be broken up. My days, I fear, are numbered."

Zillah stifled the sobs that choked her, and wrote bravely on:

"You know the sorrow which has blighted my life; and I feel that I could go joyfully to my beloved, my deeply mourned wife, if I could feel that I was leaving my child—her child and mine—happily provided for. For this purpose I should like Guy, before he leaves for India, to fulfill his promise, and, by marrying my daughter, give me the comfort of knowing that I leave her in the hands of a husband upon whom I can confidently rely."

But at this point Zillah's self-control gave way. She broke down utterly, and, bowing her head in her hands on the desk, burst forth into a passion of sobs.

The poor child could surely not be blamed. Her nature was impassioned and undisciplined; from her birth every whim had been humored, and her wildest fancies indulged to the utmost; and now suddenly upon this petted idol, who had been always guarded so carefully from the slightest disappointment, there descended the storm-cloud of sorrow, and that too not gradually, but almost in one moment. Her love for her father was a passion; and he was to be taken from her,

and she was to be given into the hands of entire strangers. The apparent calmness, almost indifference, with which her father made these arrangements, cut her to the quick. She was too young to know how much of this eagerness was attributable entirely to disease. He appeared to her as thinking of only his own wishes, and showing no consideration whatever for her own crushing grief, and no appreciation of the strength of her affection for him. The self-sacrificing father had changed into the most selfish of men, who had not one thought for her feelings.

"Oh, Zillah!" cried her father, reproachfully, in answer to her last outburst of grief. She rose and went to his bedside, struggling violently with her emotion.

"I can not write this, dearest papa," she said, in a tremulous voice; "I have promised to do just as you wish, and I will keep my word; but indeed, indeed, I can not write this letter. Will it not do as well if Hilda writes it?"

"To be sure, to be sure," said the General, who took no notice of her distress. "Hilda will do it, and then my little girl can come and sit beside her father."

Hilda was accordingly sent for. She glided noiselessly in and took her place at the Davenport; while Zillah, sitting by her father, buried her head in the bed-clothes, his feeble hands the while playing nervously with the long, straggling locks of her hair which scattered themselves over the bed. The letter was soon finished, for it contained little more than what has already been given, except the reiterated injunction that Guy should make all haste to reach Pomeroy Court. It was then sent off to the post, to the great delight of the General, whose mind became more wandering, now that the strain which had been placed upon it was removed.

"Now," said he, in a flighty way, and with an eager impetuosity which showed that his delirium had increased, "we must think of the wedding—my darling must have a grand wedding," he murmured to himself in a low whisper.

A shudder ran through Zillah as she sat by his side, but not a sound escaped her. She looked up in terror. Had every ray of reason left her father? Was she to sacrifice herself on so hideous an altar without even the satisfaction of knowing that she had given him pleasure? Then she thought that perhaps her father was living again in the past, and confounding this fearful thing which he was planning for her with his own joyous wedding. Tears flowed afresh, but silently, at the thought of the contrast. Often had her ayah delighted her childish imagination by her glowing descriptions of the magnificence of that wedding, where the festivities had lasted for a week, and the arrangements were all made on a scale of Oriental splendor. She loved to descant upon the beauty of the bride, the richness of her attire, the magnificence of her jewels, the grandeur of the guests, the splendor of the whole display—until Zillah had insensibly learned to think all this the necessary adjuncts of a wedding, and had built many a day-dream about the pomp which should surround hers, when the glorious knight whom the fairy tales had led her to expect should come to claim her hand. But at this time it was not the sacrifice of all this that was wringing her heart. She gave it not even a sigh. It was rather the thought that this marriage, which now seemed inevitable, was to take place here, while her heart was wrung with anxiety on his account—here in this room—by that bedside, which her fears told her might be a bed of death. There lay her father, her only friend—the one for whom she would lay down her life, and to soothe whose delirium she had consented to this abhorrent sacrifice of herself. The marriage thus planned was to take place, thus; it was to be a hideous, a ghastly mockery—a frightful violence to the solemnity of sorrow. She was not to be married—she was to be sold. The circumstances of that old betrothal had never been explained to her; but she knew that money was in some way connected with it, and that she was virtually bought and sold like a slave, without any will of her own. Such bitter thoughts as these filled her mind as she sat there by her father's side.

Presently her father spoke again. "Have you any dresses, Zillah?"

"Plenty, papa."

"Oh, but I mean a wedding-dress—a fine new dress; white satin my darling wore; how beautiful she looked! and a veil you must have, and plenty of jewels—pearls and diamonds. My pet will be a lovely bride."

Every one of these words was a stab, and Zillah was dumb; but her father noticed nothing of this. It was madness, but, like many cases of madness, it was very coherent.

"Send for your ayah, dear," he continued; "I must talk to her—about your wedding-dress."

Zillah rang the bell. As soon as the woman appeared the General turned to her with his usual feverish manner.

"Nurse," said he, "Miss Pomeroy is to be married at once. You must see—that she has every thing prepared—suitably—and of the very best."

The ayah stood speechless with amazement. This feeling was increased when Zillah said, in a cold monotone:

"Don't look surprised, nurse. It's quite true. I am to be married within a day or two."

Her master's absurdities the ayah could account for on the ground of delirium; but was "Little Missy" mad too? Perhaps sorrow had turned her brain, she thought. At any rate, it would be best to humor them.

"Missy had a white silk down from London last week, Sir."

"Not satin? A wedding-dress should be of satin," said the General.

"It does not matter, so that it is all white," said the nurse, with decision.

"Doesn't it? Very well," said the General. "But she must have a veil, nurse, and plenty of jewels. She must look like my darling. You remember, nurse, how *she* looked."

"Indeed I do, sahib, and you may leave all to me. I will see that Missy is as fine and grand as any of them."

The ayah began already to feel excited, and to fall in with this wild proposal. The very mention of dress had excited her Indian love of finery.

"That is right," said the General; "attend to it all. Spare no expense. Don't you go, my child," he continued, as Zillah rose and walked

shudderingly to the window. "I think I can sleep, now that my mind is at ease. Stay by me, my darling child."

"Oh, papa, do you think I would leave you?" said Zillah, and she came back to the bed.

The doctor, who had been waiting until the General should become a little calmer, now administered an anodyne, and he fell asleep, his hand clasped in Zillah's, while she, fearful of making the slightest movement, sat motionless and despairing far into the night.

CHAPTER X.

A WEDDING IN EXTREMIS.

Two days passed; on the second Guy Molyneux arrived. Lord Chetwynde was ill, and could not travel. He sent a letter, however, full of earnest and hopeful sympathy. He would not believe that things were as bad as his old friend feared; the instant that he could leave he would come up to Pomeroy Court; or if by God's providence the worst should take place, he would instantly fetch Zillah (to Chetwynde Castle; and the General might rely upon it that, so far as love and tenderness could supply a father's place, she should not feel her loss.

On Guy's arrival he was shown into the library. Luncheon was laid there, and the housekeeper apologized for Miss Pomeroy's absence. Guy took a chair and waited for a while, meditating on the time when he had last seen the girl who in a short time was to be tied to him for life. The event was excessively repugnant to him, even though he did not at all realize its full importance; and he would have given any thing to get out of it; but his father's command was sacred, and for years he had been bound by his father's word. Escape was utterly impossible. The entrance of the clergyman, who seemed more intent on the luncheon than any thing else, did not lessen Guy's feelings of repugnance. He said but little, and sank into a fit of abstraction, from which he was roused by a message that the General would like to see him. He hurried up stairs.

The General smiled faintly, and greeted him with as much warmth as his weak and prostrated condition would allow.

"Guy, my boy," said he, feebly, "I am very glad to see you."

To Guy the General seemed like a doomed man, and the discovery gave him a great shock, for he had scarcely anticipated any thing so bad as this. In spite of this, however, he expressed a hope that the General might yet recover, and be spared many years to them.

"No," said the General, sadly and wearily; "no; my days are numbered. I must die, my boy; but I shall die in peace, if I feel that I do not leave my child uncared for."

Guy, in spite of his dislike and repugnance, felt deeply moved.

"You need have no fear of that, Sir," he went on to say, in solemn, measured tones. "I solemnly promise you that no unhappiness shall ever reach her if I can help it. To the end of my life I will try to requite to her the kindness that you have shown to us. My father feels as I do, and he begged me to assure you, if he is not able to see you again, as he hopes to do, that the instant your daughter needs his care he will himself take her to Chetwynde Castle, and will watch over her with the same care and affection that you yourself would bestow; and she shall leave his home only for mine."

The General pressed his hand feebly. "God bless you!" he said, in a faint voice.

Suddenly a low sob broke the silence which followed. Turning hastily, Guy saw in the dim twilight of the sick-room what he had not before observed. It was a girl's figure crouching at the foot of the bed, her head buried in the clothes. He looked at her—his heart told him who it was—but he knew not what to say.

The General also had heard that sob. It raised no pity and compassion in him; it was simply some new stimulus to the one idea of his distempered brain.

"What, Zillah!" he said, in surprise. "You here yet? I thought you had gone to get ready."

Still the kneeling figure did not move.

"Zillah," said the General, querulously, and with an excitement in his feeble voice which showed how readily he might lapse into complete delirium—"Zillah, my child, be quick. There is no time to lose. Go and get ready for your wedding. Don't you hear me? Go and dress yourself."

"Oh, papa!" moaned Zillah, in a voice which pierced to the inmost heart of Guy, "will it not do as I am? Do not ask me to put on finery at a time like this." Her voice was one of utter anguish and despair.

"A time like this?" said the General, rousing himself somewhat—"what do you mean, child? Does not the Bible say, Like as a bride adorneth herself—for her husband—and ever shall be—world without end—amen—yes—white satin and pearls, my child—oh yes—white pearls and satin—we are all ready—where are you, my darling?" Another sob was the only reply to this incoherent speech. Guy stood as if petrified. In his journey here he had simply tried to muster up his own resolution, and to fortify his own heart. He had not given one thought to this poor despairing child. Her sorrow, her anguish, her despair, now went to his heart. Yet he knew not what to do. How gladly he would have made his escape from this horrible mockery—for her sake as well as for his own! But for such escape he saw plainly there was no possibility. That delirious mind, in its frenzy, was too intent upon its one purpose to admit of this. He himself also felt a strange and painful sense of guilt. Was not he to a great extent the cause of this, though the unwilling cause? Ah! he thought, remorsefully, can wrong be right? and can any thing justify such a desecration as this both of marriage and of death? At that moment Chetwynde faded away, and to have saved it was as nothing. Willingly would he have given up every thing if he could now have said to this poor child—who thus crouched down, crushed by a woman's sorrow before she had known a woman's years—"Farewell. You are free. I will give you a brother's love and claim nothing in return. I will give back all, and go forth penniless into the battle of life."

But the General again interrupted them, speaking impatiently: "What are you waiting for? Is not Zillah getting ready?"

Guy scarcely knew what he was doing; but, obeying the instincts of his pity, he bent down and whispered to Zillah, "My poor child, I pity you, and sympathize with you more than words can tell. It is an awful thing for you. But can you not rouse yourself? Perhaps it would calm your father. He is getting too excited."

Zillah shrunk away as though he were pollution, and Guy at this resumed his former place in sadness and in desperation, with no other idea than to wait for the end.

"Zillah! Zillah!" cried the General, almost fiercely.

At this Zillah sprang up, and rushed out of the room. She hurried up stairs, and found the ayah in her dressing-room with Hilda. In the next room her white silk was laid out, her wreath and veil beside it.

"Here's my jewel come to be dressed in her wedding-dress," said the ayah, joyously.

"Be quiet!" cried Zillah, passionately. "Don't dare to say any thing like that to me; and you may put all that trash away, for I'm not going to be married at all. I can't do it, and I won't. I hate him! I hate him! I hate him! I hate him!"

These words she hissed out with the venom of a serpent. Her attendants tried remonstrance, but in vain. Hilda pointed out to her the handsome dress, but with no greater success. Vainly they tried to plead, to coax, and to persuade. All this only seemed to strengthen her determination. At last she threw herself upon the floor, like a passionate child, in a paroxysm of rage and grief.

The unwonted self-control which for the last few days she had imposed upon herself now told upon her in the violence of the reaction which had set in. When once she had allowed the barriers to be broken down, all else gave way to the onset of passion; and the presence and remonstrances of the ayah and Hilda only made it worse. She forgot utterly her father's condition; she showed herself now as selfish in her passion as he had shown himself in his delirium. Nothing could be done to stop her. The others, familiar with these outbreaks, retired to the adjoining room and waited.

Meanwhile the others were waiting also in the room below. The doctor was there, and sat by his patient, exerting all his art to soothe him and curb his eagerness. The General refused some medicine which he offered, and declared with passion that he would take nothing whatever till the wedding was over. To have used force would have been fatal; and so the doctor had to humor his patient. The family solicitor was there with the marriage settlements, which had been prepared in great haste. Guy and the clergyman sat apart in thoughtful silence.

Half an hour passed, and Zillah did not appear. On the General's asking for her the clergyman hazarded a remark intended to be pleasant, about ladies on such occasions needing some time to adorn themselves—a little out of place under the circumstances, but it fortunately fell in with the sick man's humor, and satisfied him for the moment.

Three-quarters of an hour passed. "Surely she must be ready now," said the General, who grew more excited and irritable every moment. A messenger was thereupon dispatched for her, but she found the door bolted, and amidst the outcry and confusion in the room could only distinguish that Miss Pomeroy was not ready. This message she delivered without entering into particulars.

An hour passed, and another messenger went, with the same result. It then became impossible to soothe the General any longer. Guy also grew impatient, for he had to leave by that evening's train; and if the thing had to be it must be done soon. He began to hope that it might be postponed—that Zillah might not come—and then he would have to leave the thing unfinished. But then he thought of his father's command, and the General's desire—of his own promise—of the fact that it must be done—of the danger to the General if it were not done. Between these conflicting feelings—his desire to escape, and his desire to fulfill what he considered his obligations—his brain grew confused, and he sat there impatient for the end—to see what it might turn out to be.

Another quarter of an hour passed. The General's excitement grew worse, and was deepening into frenzy. Dr. Cowell looked more and more anxious, and at last, shrewdly suspecting the cause of the delay, determined himself to go and take it in hand. He accordingly left his patient, and was just crossing the room, when his progress was arrested by the General's springing up with a kind of convulsive start, and jumping out of bed, declaring wildly and incoherently that something must be wrong, and that he himself would go and bring Zillah. The doctor had to turn again to his patient. The effort was a spasmodic one, and the General was soon put back again to bed, where he lay groaning and panting; while the doctor, finding that he could not leave him even for an instant, looked around for some one to send in his place. Who could it be? Neither the lawyer nor the clergyman seemed suitable. There was no one left but Guy, who seemed to the doctor, from his face and manner, to be capable of dealing with any difficulty. So he called Guy to him, and hurriedly whispered to him the state of things.

"If the General has to wait any longer, he will die," said the doctor. "*You'll* have to go and bring her. You're the only person. You *must*. Tell her that her father has already had one fit, and that every moment destroys his last chance of life. She must either decide to come at once, or else sacrifice him."

He then rang the bell, and ordered the servant to lead Captain Molyneux to Miss Pomeroy. Guy was thus forced to be an actor where his highest desire was to be passive. There was no alternative. In that moment all his future was involved. He saw it; he knew it; but he did not shrink. Honor bound him to this marriage, hateful as it was. The other actor in the scene detested it as much as he did, but there was no help for it. Could he sit passive and let the General die? The marriage, after all, he thought, had to come off; it was terrible to have it now; but then the last chance of the General's life was dependent upon this marriage. What could he do?

What? A rapid survey of his whole situation decided him. He would perform what he considered his vow. He would do his part toward saving the General's life, though that part was

so hard. He was calm, therefore, and self-possessed, as the servant entered and led the way to Zillah's apartments. The servant on receiving the order grinned in spite of the solemnity of the occasion. He had a pretty clear idea of the state of things; he was well accustomed to what was styled, in the servants' hall, "Missy's tantrums;" and he wondered to himself how Guy would ever manage her. He was too good a servant, however, to let his feelings be seen, and so he led the way demurely, and knocking at Zillah's door, announced:

"Captain Molyneux."

The door was at once opened by the ayah. At that instant Zillah sprang to her feet and looked at him in a fury of passion.

"*You!*" she cried, with indescribable malignancy. "*You!* You here! How dare *you* come here? Go down stairs this instant! If it is my money you want, take it all and begone. I will never, never, never, marry you!"

For a moment Guy was overcome. The taunt was certainly horrible. He turned pale, but soon regained his self-possession.

"Miss Pomeroy," said he, quietly, yet earnestly, "this is not the time for a scene. Your father is in the utmost danger. He has waited for an hour and a quarter. He is getting worse every moment. He made one attempt to get out of bed, and come for you himself. The doctor ordered me to come, and that is why I am here."

"I don't believe you!" screamed Zillah. "You are trying to frighten me."

"I have nothing to say," replied Guy, mournfully. "Your father is rapidly getting into a state of frenzy. If it lasts much longer he will die."

Guy's words penetrated to Zillah's inmost soul. A wild fear arose, which in a moment chased away the fury which had possessed her. Her face changed. She struck her hands against her brow, and uttered an exclamation of terror.

"Tell him—tell him—I'm coming. Make haste," she moaned. "I'll be down immediately. Oh, make haste!"

She hurried back, and Guy went down stairs again, where he waited at the bottom with his soul in a strange tumult, and his heart on fire. Why was it that he had been sold for all this—he and that wretched child?

But now Zillah was all changed. Now she was as excited in her haste to go down stairs as she had before been anxious to avoid it. She rushed back to the bedroom where Hilda was, who, though unseen, had heard every thing, and, foreseeing what the end might be, was now getting things ready.

"Be quick, Hilda!" she gasped. "Papa is dying! Oh, be quick—be quick! Let me save him!"

She literally tore off the dress that she had on, and in less than five minutes she was dressed. She would not stop for Hilda to arrange her wreath, and was rushing down stairs without her veil, when the ayah ran after her with it.

"You are leaving your luck, Missy darling," said she.

"Ay—that I am," said Zillah, bitterly.

"But you will put it on, Missy," pleaded the ayah. "Sahib has talked so much about it."

Zillah stopped. The ayah threw it over her, and enveloped her in its soft folds.

"It was your mother's veil, Missy," she added. "Give me a kiss for her sake before you go."

Zillah flung her arms around the old woman's neck.

"Hush, hush!" she said. "Do not make me give way again, or I can never do it."

At the foot of the stairs Guy was waiting, and they entered the room solemnly together—these two victims—each summoning up all that Honor and Duty might supply to assist in what each felt to be a sacrifice of all life and happiness. But to Zillah the sacrifice was worse, the task was harder, and the ordeal more dreadful. For it was her father, not Guy's, who lay there, with a face that already seemed to have the touch of death; it was she who felt to its fullest extent the ghastliness of this hideous mockery.

But the General, whose eyes were turned eagerly toward the door, found in this scene nothing but joy. In his frenzy he regarded them as blessed and happy, and felt this to be the full realization of his highest hopes.

"Ah!" he said, with a long gasp; "here she is at last. Let us begin at once."

So the little group formed itself around the bed, the ayah and Hilda being present in the background.

In a low voice the clergyman began the marriage service. Far more solemn and impressive did it sound now than when heard under circumstances of gayety and splendor; and as the words sank into Guy's soul, he reproached himself more than ever for never having considered the meaning of the act to which he had so thoughtlessly pledged himself.

The General had now grown calm. He lay perfectly motionless, gazing wistfully at his daughter's face. So quiet was he, and so fixed was his gaze, that they thought he had sunk into some abstracted fit; but when the clergyman, with some hesitation, asked the question,

"Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" the General instantly responded, in a firm voice, "I do." Then reaching forth, he took Zillah's hand, and instead of giving it to the clergyman, he himself placed it within Guy's, and for a moment held both hands in his, while he seemed to be praying for a blessing to rest on their union.

The service proceeded. Solemnly the priest uttered the warning: "Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Solemnly, too, he pronounced the benediction—"May ye so live together in this life that in the world to come ye shall have life everlasting."

And so, for better or worse, Guy Molyneux and Zillah Pomeroy rose up—*man and wife!*

After the marriage ceremony was over the clergyman administered the Holy Communion—all who were present partaking with the General; and solemn indeed was the thought that filled the mind of each, that ere long, perhaps, one of their number might be—not figuratively, but literally—"with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven."

After this was all over the doctor gave the General a soothing draught. He was quite calm now; he took it without objection; and it had the effect of throwing him soon into a quiet sleep.

The clergyman and the lawyer now departed; and the doctor, motioning to Guy and Zillah to

"THE CLERGYMAN BEGAN THE MARRIAGE SERVICE."

leave the room, took his place, with an anxious countenance, by the General's bedside. The husband and wife went into the adjoining room, from which they could hear the deep breathing of the sick man.

It was an awkward moment. Guy had to depart in a short time. That sullen stolid girl who now sat before him, black and gloomy as a thunder-cloud, was *his wife*. He was going away, perhaps forever. He did not know exactly how to treat her; whether with indifference as a willful child, or compassionate attention as one deeply afflicted. On the whole he felt deeply for her, in spite of his own forebodings of his future; and so he followed the more generous dictates of his heart. Her utter loneliness, and the thought that

"THE CLERGYMAN BEGAN THE MARRIAGE SERVICE."

her father might soon be taken away, touched him deeply; and this feeling was evident in his whole manner as he spoke.

"Zillah," said he, "our regiment sails for India several days sooner than I first expected, and it is necessary for me to leave in a short time. You, of course, are to remain with your father, and I hope that he may soon be restored to you. Let me assure you that this whole scene has been, under the circumstances, most painful, for your sake, for I have felt keenly that I was the innocent cause of great sorrow to you."

He spoke to her calmly, and as a father would to a child, and at the same time reached out his hand to take hers. She snatched it away quickly.

"Captain Molyneux," said she, coldly, "I married you solely to please my father, and because he was not in a state to have his wishes opposed. It was a sacrifice of myself, and a bitter one. As to you, I put no trust in you, and take no interest whatever in your plans. But there is one thing which I wish you to tell me. What did papa mean by saying to the doctor, that if I did not marry you I should lose one-half of my fortune?"

Zillah's manner at once chilled all the warm feelings of pity and generosity which Guy had begun to feel. Her question also was an embarrassing one. He had hoped that the explanation might come later, and from his father. It was an awkward one for him to make. But Zillah was looking at him impatiently.

"Surely," she continued in a stern voice as she noticed his hesitation, "that is a question which I have a right to ask."

"Of course," said Guy, hastily. "I will tell you. It was because more than half your fortune was taken to pay off the debt on Chetwynde Castle."

A deep, angry, crimson flush passed over Zillah's face.

"So that is the reason why I have been sold?" she cried, impetuously. "Well, Sir, your manœuvring has succeeded nobly. Let me congratulate you. You have taken in a guileless old man, and a young girl."

Guy looked at her for a moment in fierce indignation. But with a great effort he subdued it, and answered, as calmly as possible:

"You do not know either my father or myself, or you would be convinced that such language could not apply to either of us. The proposal originally emanated entirely from General Pomeroy."

"Ah?" said Zilla, fiercely. "But you were base enough to take advantage of his generosity and his love for his old friend. Oh!" she cried, bursting into tears, "that is what I feel, that he could sacrifice me, who loved him so, for your sakes. I honestly believed once that it was his anxiety to find me a protector."

Guy's face had grown very pale.

"And so it was," he said, in a voice which was deep and tremulous from his strong effort at self-control. "He trusted my father, and trusted me, and wished to protect you from unprincipled fortune-hunters."

"*Fortune-hunters!*" cried Zillah, her face flushed, and with accents of indescribable scorn. "Good Heavens! What are you if you are not this very thing? Oh, how I hate you! how I hate you!"

Guy looked at her, and for a moment was on the point of answering her in the same fashion, and pouring out all his scorn and contempt. But again he restrained himself.

"You are excited," he said, coolly. "One of these days you will find out your mistake. You will learn, as you grow older, that the name of Chetwynde can not be coupled with charges like these. In the mean time allow me to advise you not to be quite so free in your language when you are addressing honorable gentlemen; and to suggest that your father, who loved you better than any one in the world, may possibly have had *some* cause for the confidence which he felt in us."

There was a coolness in Guy's tone which showed that he did not think it worth while to be angry with her, or to resent her insults. But Zillah did not notice this. She went on as before:

"There is one thing which I will never forgive."

"Indeed? Well, your forgiveness is so very important that I should like to know what it is that prevents me from gaining it."

"The way in which I have been deceived!" burst forth Zillah, fiercely. "If papa had wished to give you half of his money, or all of it, I should not have cared a bit. I do not care for that at all. But why did nobody tell me the truth? Why was I told that it was out of regard to *me* that this horror, this frightful mockery of marriage, was forced upon me, while my heart was breaking with anxiety about my father; when to you I was only a necessary evil, without which you could not hope to get my father's money; and the only good I can possibly have is the future privilege of living in a place whose very name I loathe, with the man who has cheated me, and whom all my life I shall hate and abhor? Now go! and I pray God I may never see you again."

With these words, and without waiting for a reply, she left the room, leaving Guy in a state of mind by no means enviable.

He stood staring after her. "And that thing is mine for life!" he thought; "that she-devil! utterly destitute of sense and of reason! Oh, Chetwynde, Chetwynde! you have cost me dear. See you again, my fiend of a wife! I hope not. No, never while I live. Some of these days I'll give you back your sixty thousand with interest. And you, why you may go to the devil forever!"

Half an hour afterward Guy was seated in the dog-cart bowling to the station as fast as two thorough-breds could take him; every moment congratulating himself on the increasing distance which was separating him from his bride of an hour.

The doctor watched all that night. On the following morning the General was senseless. On the next day he died.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW HOME.

DEARLY had Zillah paid for that frenzy of her dying father; and the consciousness that her whole life was now made over irrevocably to another, brought to her a pang so acute that it counterbalanced the grief which she felt for her father's death. Fierce anger and bitter indig-

nation struggled with the sorrow of bereavement, and sometimes, in her blind rage, she even went so far as to reproach her father's memory. On all who had taken part in that fateful ceremony she looked with vengeful feelings. She thought, and there was reason in the thought, that they might have satisfied his mind without binding her. They could have humored his delirium without forfeiting her liberty. They could have had a mock priest, who might have read a service which would have had no authority, and imposed vows which would not be binding. On Guy she looked with the deepest scorn, for she believed that he was the chief offender, and that if he had been a man of honor he might have found many ways to avoid this thing. Possibly Guy as he drove off was thinking the same, and cursing his dull wit for not doing something to delay the ceremony or make it void. But to both it was now too late.

The General's death took place too soon for Zillah. Had he lived she might have been spared long sorrows. Had it not been for this, and his frantic haste in forcing on a marriage, her early betrothal might have had different results. Guy would have gone to India. He would have remained there for years, and then have come home. On his return he might possibly have won her love, and then they could have settled down harmoniously in the usual fashion. But now she found herself thrust upon him, and the very thought of him was a horror. Never could the remembrance of that hideous mockery at the bedside of one so dear, who was passing away forever, leave her mind. All the solemnities of death had been outraged, and all her memories of the dying hours of her best friend were forever associated with bitterness and shame.

For some time after her father's death she gave herself up to the motions of her wild and ungovernable temper. Alternations of savage fury and mute despair succeeded to one another. To one like her there was no relief from either mood; and, in addition to this, there was the prospect of the arrival of Lord Chetwynde. The thought of this filled her with such a passion of anger that she began to meditate flight. She mentioned this to Hilda, with the idea that of course Hilda would go with her.

Hilda listened in her usual quiet way, and with a great appearance of sympathy. She assented to it, and quite appreciated Zillah's position. But she suggested that it might be difficult to carry out such a plan without money.

"Money!" said Zillah, in astonishment. "Why, have I not plenty of money? All is mine now surely."

"Very likely," said Hilda, coolly; "but how do you propose to get it? You know the lawyer has all the papers, and every thing else under lock and key till Lord Chetwynde comes, and the will is read; besides, dear," she added with a soft smile, "you forget that a married woman can not possess property. Our charming English law gives her no rights. All that you nominally possess in reality belongs to your husband."

At this hated word "husband," Zillah's eyes flashed. She clenched her hands, and ground her teeth in rage.

"Be quiet!" she cried, in a voice which was scarce audible from passion. "Can you not let me forget my shame and disgrace for one moment? Why must you thrust it in my face?"

Hilda's little suggestion thus brought full before Zillah's mind one galling yet undeniable truth, which showed her an insurmountable obstacle in the way of her plan. To one utterly unaccustomed to control of any kind, the thought added fresh rage, and she now sought refuge in thinking how she could best encounter her new enemy, Lord Chetwynde, and what she might say to show how she scorned him and his son. She succeeded in arranging a very promising plan of action, and made up many very bitter and insulting speeches, out of which she selected one which seemed to be the most cutting, galling, and insulting which she could think of. It was very nearly the same language which she had used to Guy, and the same taunts were repeated in a somewhat more pointed manner.

At length Lord Chetwynde arrived, and Zillah, after refusing to see him for two days, went down. She entered the drawing-room, her heart on fire, and her brain seething with bitter words, and looked up to see her enemy. That enemy, however, was an old man whose sight was too dim to see the malignant glance of her dark eyes, and the fierce passion of her face. Knowing that she was coming, he was awaiting her, and Zillah on looking up saw him. That first sight at once quelled her fury. She saw a noble and refined face, whereon there was an expression of tenderest sympathy. Before she could recover from the shock which the sight of such a face had given to her passion he had advanced rapidly toward her, took her in his arms, and kissed her tenderly.

"My poor child," he said, in a voice of indescribable sweetness—"my poor orphan child, I can not tell how I feel for you; but you belong to me now. I will try to be another father."

The tones of his voice were so full of affection that Zillah, who was always sensitive to the power of love and kindness, was instantly softened and subdued. Before the touch of that kiss of love and those words of tenderness every emotion of anger fled away; her passion subsided; she forgot all her vengeance, and, taking his hand in both of hers, she burst into tears.

The Earl gently led her to a seat. In a low voice full of the same tender affection he began to talk of her father, of their old friendship in the long-vanished youth, of her father's noble nature, and self-sacrificing character; till his fond eulogies of his dead friend awakened in Zillah, even amidst her grief for the dead, a thousand reminiscences of his character when alive, and she began to feel that one who so knew and loved her father must himself have been most worthy to be her father's friend.

It was thus that her first interview with the Earl dispelled her vindictive passion. At once she began to look upon him as the one who was best adapted to fill her father's place, if that place could ever be filled. The more she saw of him, the more her new-born affection for him strengthened, and during the week which he spent at Pomeroy Court she had become so greatly changed that she looked back to her old feelings of hate with mournful wonder.

In due time the General's will was read. It was very simple: Thirty thousand pounds were left to Zillah. To Hilda three thousand pounds

were left as a tribute of affection to one who had been to him, as he said, "like a daughter." Hilda he recommended most earnestly to the care and affection of Lord Chetwynde, and desired that she and Zillah should never be separated unless they themselves desired it. To that last request of his dying friend Lord Chetwynde proved faithful. He addressed Hilda with kindness and affection, expressed sympathy with her in the loss of her benefactor, and promised to do all in his power to make good the loss which she had suffered in his death. She and Zillah, he told her, might live as sisters in Chetwynde Castle. Perhaps the time might come when their grief would be alleviated, and then they would both learn to look upon him with something of that affection which they had felt for General Pomeroy.

When Hilda and Zillah went with the Earl to Chetwynde Castle there was one other who was invited there, and who afterward followed. This was Gualtier. Hilda had recommended him; and as the Earl was very anxious that Zillah should not grow up to womanhood without further education, he caught at the idea which Hilda had thrown out. So before leaving he sought out Gualtier, and proposed that he should continue his instructions at Chetwynde.

"You can live very well in the village," said the Earl. "There are families there with whom you can lodge comfortably. Mrs. Molyneux is acquainted with you and your style of teaching, and therefore I would prefer you to any other."

Gualtier bowed so low that the flush of pleasure which came over his sallow face, and his smile of ill-concealed triumph, could not be seen.

"You are too kind, my lord," he said, obsequiously. "I have always done my best in my instructions, and will humbly endeavor to do so in the future."

So Gualtier followed them, and arrived at Chetwynde a short time after them, bearing with him his power, or perhaps his fate, to influence Zillah's fortunes and future.

Chetwynde Castle had experienced some changes during these years. The old butler had been gathered to his fathers, but Mrs. Hart still remained. The Castle itself and the grounds had changed wonderfully for the better. It had lost that air of neglect, decay, and ruin which had formerly been its chief characteristic. It was no longer poverty-stricken. It arose, with its antique towers and venerable ivy-grown walls, exhibiting in its outline all that age possesses of dignity, without any of the meanness of neglect. It seemed like one of the noblest remains which England possessed of the monuments of feudal times. The first sight of it elicited a cry of admiration from Zillah; and she found not the least of its attractions in the figure of the old Earl—himself a monument of the past—whose figure, as he stood on the steps to welcome them, formed a fore-ground which an artist would have loved to portray.

Around the Castle all had changed. What had once been little better than a wilderness was now a wide and well-kept park. The rose pleasaunce had been restored to its pristine glory. The lawns were smooth-shaven and glowing in their rich emerald-green. The lakes and ponds were no longer overgrown with dank rushes; but had been reclaimed from being little better than marshes into bright expanses of clear water, where fish swam and swans loved to sport. Long avenues and cool, shadowy walks wound far away through the groves; and the stately oaks and elms around the Castle had lost that ghostly and gloomy air which had once been spread about them.

Within the Castle every thing had undergone a corresponding change. There was no attempt at modern splendor, no effort to rival the luxuries of the wealthier lords of England. The Earl had been content with arresting the progress of decay, and adding to the restoration of the interior some general air of modern comfort. Within, the scene corresponded finely to that which lay without; and the medieval character of the interior made it attractive to Zillah's peculiar taste.

The white-faced, mysterious-looking housekeeper, as she looked sadly and wistfully at the new-comers, and asked in a tremulous voice which was Guy's wife, formed for Zillah a striking incident in the arrival. To her Zillah at once took a strong liking, and Mrs. Hart seemed to form one equally strong for her. From the very first her affection for Zillah was very manifest, and as the days passed it increased. She seemed to cling to the young girl as though her loving nature needed something on which to expend its love; as though there was a maternal instinct which craved to be satisfied, and sought such satisfaction in her. Zillah returned her tender affection with a fondness which would have satisfied the most exigeant nature. She herself had never known the sweetness of a mother's care, and it seemed as though she had suddenly found out all this. The discovery was delightful to so affectionate a nature as hers; and her enthusiastic disposition made her devotion to Mrs. Hart more marked. She often wondered to herself why Mrs. Hart had "taken such a fancy" to her. And so did the other members of the household. Perhaps it was because she was the wife of Guy, who was so dear to the heart of his affectionate old nurse. Perhaps it was something in Zillah herself which attracted Mrs. Hart, and made her seek in her one who might fill Guy's place.

Time passed away, and Gualtier arrived, in accordance with the Earl's request. Zillah had supposed that she was now free forever from all teachers and lessons, and it was with some dismay that she heard of Gualtier's arrival. She said nothing, however, but prepared to go through the form of taking lessons in music and drawing as before. She had begun already to have a certain instinct of obedience toward the Earl, and felt desirous to gratify his wishes. But whatever changes of feeling she had experienced toward her new guardian, she showed no change of manner toward Gualtier. To her, application to any thing was a thing as irksome as ever. Perhaps her fitful efforts to advance were more frequent; but after each effort she used invariably to relapse into idleness and tedium.

Her manner troubled Gualtier as little as ever. He let her have her own way quite in the old style. Hilda, as before, was always present at these instructions; and after the hour devoted to Zillah had expired she had lessons of her own. But Gualtier remarked that, for some reason or other, a great change had come over her. Her attitude toward him had relapsed into one of reti-

"THE WHITE-FACED, MYSTERIOUS-LOOKING HOUSEKEEPER ASKED IN A TREMULOUS VOICE WHICH WAS GUY'S WIFE"

cence and reserve. The approaches to confidence and familiarity which she had formerly made seemed now to be completely forgotten by her. The stealthy conversations in which they used to indulge were not renewed. Her manner was such that he did not venture to enter upon his former footing. True, Zillah was always in the room now, and did not leave so often as she used to do, but still there were times when they were alone; yet on these occasions Hilda showed no desire to return to that intimacy which they had once known in their private interviews.

This new state of things Gualtier bore meekly and patiently. He was either too respectful or too cunning to make any advances himself. Perhaps he had a deep conviction that Hilda's changed

"THE WHITE-FACED, MYSTERIOUS-LOOKING HOUSEKEEPER ASKED IN A TREMULOUS VOICE WHICH WAS GUY'S WIFE."

manner was but temporary, and that the purpose which she had once revealed might still be cherished in her heart. True, the General's death had changed the aspect of affairs; but he had his reasons for believing that it could not altogether destroy her plans. He had a deep conviction that the time would come one day when he would know what was on her mind. He was patient. He could wait. So the time went on.

As the time passed the life at Chetwynde Castle became more and more grateful to Zillah. Naturally affectionate, her heart had softened under its new trials and experiences, and there was full chance for the growth of those kindly and generous emotions which, after all, were most natural and congenial to her. In addition to her own affection for the Earl and for Mrs. Hart, she found a constraint on her here which she had not known while living the life of a spoiled and indulged child in her own former home. The sorrow through which she had passed had made her less childish. The Earl began in reality to seem to her like a second father, one whom she could both revere and love.

Very soon after her first acquaintance with him she found out that by no possibility could he be a party to any thing dishonorable. Finding thus that her first suspicions were utterly unfounded, she began to think it possible that her marriage, though odious in itself, had been planned with a good intent. To think Lord Chetwynde mercenary was impossible. His character was so high-toned, and even so punctilious in its regard to nice points of honor, that he was not even worldly wise. With the mode in which her marriage had been finally carried out he had clearly nothing whatever to do. Of all her suspicions, her anger against an innocent and noble-minded man, and her treatment of him on his first visit to Pomeroy Court, she now felt thoroughly ashamed. She longed to tell him all about it—to explain why it was that she had felt so and done so—and waited for some favorable opportunity for making her confession.

At length an opportunity occurred. One day the Earl was speaking of her father, and he told Zillah about his return to England, and his visit to Chetwynde Castle; and finally told how the whole arrangement had been made between them by which she had become Guy's wife. He spoke with such deep affection about General Pomeroy, and so feelingly of his intense love for his daughter, that at last Zillah began to understand perfectly the motives of the actors in this matter. She saw that in the whole affair, from first to last, there was nothing but the fondest thought of herself, and that the very money itself, which she used to think had "purchased her," was in some sort an investment for her own benefit in the future. As the whole truth flashed suddenly into Zillah's mind she saw now most clearly not only how deeply she had wronged Lord Chetwynde, but also—and now for the first time—how foully she had insulted Guy by her malignant accusations. To a generous nature like hers the shock of this discovery was intensely painful. Tears started to her eyes, she twined her arms around Lord Chetwynde's neck, and told him the whole story, not excepting a single word of all that she had said to Guy.

"And I told him," she concluded, "all this—I said that he was a mean fortune-hunter; and that you had cheated papa out of his money; and that I hated him—and oh! will you ever forgive me?"

This was altogether a new and unexpected disclosure to the Earl, and he listened to Zillah in unfeigned astonishment. Guy had told him nothing beyond the fact communicated in a letter—that "whatever his future wife might be remarkable for, he did not think that amiability was her forte." But all this revelation, unexpected though it was, excited no feeling of resentment in his mind.

"My child," said he, tenderly, though somewhat sadly, "you certainly behaved very ill. Of course you could not know us; but surely you might have trusted your father's love and wisdom. But, after all, there were a good many excuses for you, my poor little girl—so I pity you very much indeed—it was a terrible ordeal for one so young. I can understand more than you have cared to tell me."

"Ah, how kind, how good you are!" said Zillah, who had anticipated some reproaches. "But I'll never forgive myself for doing you such injustice."

"Oh, as to that," said Lord Chetwynde; "if you feel that you have done any injustice, there is one way that I can tell you of by which you can make full reparation. Will you try to make it, my little girl?"

"What do you want me to do?" asked Zillah, hesitatingly, not wishing to compromise herself. The first thought which she had was that he was going to ask her to apologize to Guy—a thing which she would by no means care about doing, even in her most penitent mood. Lord Chetwynde was one thing; but Guy was quite another. The former she loved dearly; but toward the latter she still felt resentment—a feeling which was perhaps strengthened and sustained by the fact that every one at Chetwynde looked upon her as a being who had been placed upon the summit of human happiness by the mere fact of being Guy's wife. To her it was intolerable to be valued merely for his sake. Human nature is apt to resent in any case having its blessings perpetually thrust in its face; but in this case what they called a blessing, to her seemed the blackest horror of her life; and Zillah's resentment was all the stronger; while all this resentment she naturally vented on the head of the one who had become her husband. She could manage to tolerate his praises when sounded by the Earl, but hardly so with the others. Mrs. Hart was most trying to her patience in this respect; and it needed all Zillah's love for her to sustain her while listening to the old nurse as she grew eloquent on her favorite theme. Zillah felt like the Athenian who was bored to death by the perpetual praise of Aristides. If she had no other complaint against him, this might of itself have been enough.

The fear, however, which was in her mind as to the reparation which was expected of her was dispelled by Lord Chetwynde's answer:

"I want you, my child," said he, "to try and improve yourself—to get on as fast as you can with your masters, so that when the time comes for you to take your proper place in society you may be equal to ladies of your own rank in education and accomplishments. I want to be proud of my daughter when I show her to the world."

"And so you shall," said Zillah, twining her arms again about his neck and kissing him fondly. "I promise you that from this time forward I will try to study."

He kissed her lovingly. "I am sure," said he, "that you will keep your word, my child; and now," he added, "one thing more: How much longer do you intend to keep up this 'Lord Chetwynde?' I must be called by another name by you—not the name by which you called your own dear father—that is too sacred to be given to any other. But have I not some claim to be called 'Father,' dear? Or does not my little Zillah care enough for me for that?"

At this the warm-hearted girl flung her arms around him once more and kissed him, and burst into tears.

"Dear father!" she murmured.

And from that moment perfect confidence and love existed between these two.

CHAPTER XII.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Time sped rapidly and uneventfully by. Guy's letters from India formed almost the only break in the monotony of the household. Zillah soon found herself, against her will, sharing in the general eagerness respecting these letters. It would have been a very strong mind indeed, or a very obdurate heart, which could have remained unmoved at Lord Chetwynde's delight when he received his boy's letters. Their advent was also the Hegira from which every thing in the family dated. Apart, however, from the halo which surrounded these letters, they were interesting in themselves. Guy wrote easily and well. His letters to his father were half familiar, half filial; a mixture of love and good-fellowship, showing a sort of union, so to speak, of the son with the younger brother. They were full of humor also, and made up of descriptions of life in the East, with all its varied wonders. Besides this, Guy happened to be stationed at the very place where General Pomeroy had been Resident for so many years; and he himself had command of one of the hill stations where Zillah herself had once been sent to pass the summer. These places of which Guy's letters treated possessed for her a peculiar interest, surrounded as they were by some of the pleasantest associations of her life; and thus, from very many causes, it happened that she gradually came to take an interest in these letters which increased rather than diminished.

In one of these there had once come a note inclosed to Zillah, condoling with her on her father's death. It was manly and sympathetic, and not at all stiff. Zillah had received it when her bitter feelings were in the ascendant, and did not think of answering it until Hilda urged on her the necessity of doing so. It is just possible that if Hilda had made use of different arguments she might have persuaded Zillah to send some sort of an answer, if only to please the Earl. The arguments, however, which she did use happened to be singularly ill chosen. The "husband" loomed largely in them, and there were very many direct allusions to marital authority. As these were Zillah's sorest points, such references only served to excite fresh repugnance, and strengthen Zillah's determination not to write. Hilda, however, persisted in her efforts; and the result was that finally, at the end of one long and rather stormy discussion, Zillah passionately threw the letter at her, saying:

"If you are so anxious to have it answered, do it yourself. It is a world of pities he is not your husband instead of mine, you seem so wonderfully anxious about him."

"It is unkind of you to say that," replied Hilda, in a meek voice, "when you know so well that my sympathy and anxiety are all for you, and you alone. You argue with me as though I had some interest in it; but what possible interest can it be to me?"

"Oh, well, dearest Hilda," said Zillah, instantly appeased; "I'm always pettish; but you won't mind, will you? You never mind my ways."

"I've a great mind to take you at your word," said Hilda, after a thoughtful pause, "and write it for you. It ought to be answered, and you won't; so why should I not do the part of a friend, and answer it for you?"

Zillah started, and seemed just a little nettled.

"Oh, I don't care," she said, with assumed indifference. "If you choose to take the trouble, why I am sure I ought to be under obligations to you. At any rate, I shall be glad to get rid of it so long as I have nothing to do with it. I suppose it must be done."

Hilda made some protestations of her devotion to Zillah, and some further conversation followed, all of which resulted in this—that *Hilda wrote the letter in Zillah's name*, and signed that name *in her own hand*, and under Zillah's own eye, and with Zillah's half-reluctant, half-pettish concurrence.

Out of this beginning there flowed results of an important character, which were soon perceived even by Zillah, though she was forced to keep her feelings to herself. Occasional notes came afterward from time to time for Zillah, and were answered in the same way by Hilda. All this Zillah endured quietly, but with real repugnance, which increased until the change took place in her feelings which has been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, when she at length determined to put an end to such an anomalous state of things and assert herself. It was difficult to do so. She loved Hilda dearly, and placed perfect confidence in her. She was too guileless to dream of any sinister motive in her friend; and the only difficulty of which she was conscious was the fear that Hilda might suspect the change in her feelings toward Guy. The very idea of Hilda's finding this out alarmed her sensitive pride, and made her defer for a long time her intent. At length, however, she felt unable to do so any longer, and determined to run the risk of disclosing the state of her feelings.

So one day, after the receipt of a note to herself, a slight degree more friendly than usual, she hinted to Hilda rather shyly that she would like to answer it herself.

"Oh, I am *so* glad, darling!" cried Hilda, enthusiastically. "It will be so much nicer for you to do it yourself. It will relieve me from embarrassment, for, after all, my position *was* embarrassing—writing for you always—and then, you know, you will write far better letters than I can."

"It will be a Heaven-born gift, then," returned Zillah, laughing, "as I never wrote a letter in my life."

"That is nothing," said Hilda. "I write for another; but you will be writing for yourself, and that makes all the difference in the world, you know."

"Well, perhaps so. You see, Hilda, I have taken a fancy to try my hand at it," said Zillah, laughingly, full of delight at the ease with which she had gained her desire. "You see," she went on, with unusual sprightliness of manner, "I got hold of a 'Complete Letter-Writer' this morning; and the beauty, elegance, and even eloquence of those amazing compositions have so excited me that I want to emulate them. Now it happens that Guy is the only correspondent that I have, and so he must be my first victim."

So saying, Zillah laughingly opened her desk, while Hilda's dark eyes regarded her with sharp and eager watchfulness.

"You must not make it too eloquent, dear," said she. "Remember the very commonplace epistles that you have been giving forth in your name."

"Don't be alarmed," said Zillah. "If it is not exactly like a child's first composition we shall all have great cause for thankfulness."

So saying, she took out a sheet of paper.

"Here," said she, "is an opportunity of using some of this elaborately monogrammed paper which poor darling papa got for me, because I wanted to see how they could work my unpromising 'Z' into a respectable cipher. They have made it utterly illegible, and I believe that is the great point to be attained."

Thus rattling on, she dated her letter, and began to write. She wrote as far as

"My dear Guy."—Then she stopped, and read it aloud.—"This is really getting most exciting," she said, in high good-humor. "Now what comes next? To find a beginning—there's the rub. I must turn to my 'Complete Letter-Writer.' Let me see. '*Letter from a Son at School*'—that won't do. '*From a Lady to a Lover returning a Miniature*'—nor that. '*From a Suitor requesting to be allowed to pay his attentions to a Lady*'—worse and worse. '*From a Father declining the application of a Suitor for his Daughter's hand*'—absurd! Oh, here we are—'*From a Wife to a Husband who is absent on urgent business.*' Oh, listen, Hilda!" and Zillah read:

"'Beloved and honored Husband,—*The grief which wrung my heart at your departure has been mitigated by the delight which I experienced at the receipt of your most welcome letters.*' Isn't that delightful?" Unluckily his departure didn't wring my heart at all, and, worse still, I have no grief at his absence to be mitigated by his letters. Alas! I'm afraid mine must be an exceptional case, for even my 'Complete Letter-Writer,' my vade-mecum, which goes into such charming details, can not help me. After all I suppose I must use my own poor brains."

After all this nonsense Zillah suddenly grew serious. Hilda seemed to understand the cause of her extravagant volatility, and watched her closely. Zillah began to write, and went on rapidly, without a moment's hesitation; without any signs whatever of that childish inexperience at which she had hinted. Her pen flew over the paper with a speed which seemed to show that she had plenty to say, and knew perfectly well how to say it. So she went on until she had filled two pages, and was proceeding to the third. Then an exclamation from Hilda caused her to look up.

"My dear Zillah," cried Hilda, who was sitting in a chair a little behind her, "what in the world are you thinking of? From this distance I can distinguish your somewhat peculiar caligraphy—with its bold down strokes and decided 'character,' that people talk about. Now, as you know that I write a little, cramped, German hand, you will have to imitate my humble handwriting, or else I'm afraid Captain Molyneux will be thoroughly puzzled—unless, indeed, you tell him that you have been employing an amanuensis. That will require a good deal of explanation, but—" she added, after a thoughtful pause, "I dare say it will be the best in the end."

At these words Zillah started, dropped her pen, and sat looking at Hilda perfectly aghast.

"I never thought of that," she murmured, and sat with an expression of the deepest dejection. At length a long sigh escaped her.

"You are right, Hilda," she said. "Of course it will need explanation; but how is it possible to do that in a letter? It can't be done. At least I can't do it. What shall I do?"

She was silent, and sat for a long time, looking deeply vexed and disappointed.

"Of course," she said at last, "he will have to know all when he comes back; but that is nothing. How utterly stupid it was in me not to think of the difference in our writing! And

now I suppose I must give up my idea of writing a letter. It is really hard—I have not a single correspondent."

Her deep disappointment, her vexation, and her feeble attempt to conceal her emotions, were not lost upon the watchful [redacted]. But the latter showed no signs that [redacted] had noticed any thing.

"Oh, don't give it up!" she answered, with apparent eagerness. "I dare say you can copy my hand accurately enough to avoid detection. Here is a note I wrote yesterday. See if you can't imitate that, and make your writing as like mine as possible."

So saying she drew a note from her pocket and handed it to Zillah. The other took it eagerly, and began to try to imitate it, but a few strokes showed her the utter impossibility of such an undertaking. She threw down the pen, and leaning her head upon her hand, sat looking upon the floor in deeper dejection than ever.

"I can't copy such horrid cramped letters," she said, pettishly; "why should you write such a hand? Besides, I feel as if I were really forging, or doing something dreadful. I suppose," she added, with unconcealed bitterness of tone, "we shall have to go on as we began, and you must be *Zillah Molyneux* for some time longer."

Hilda laughed.

"Talk of forging!" she said. "What is forging if that is not? But really, Zillah, darling, you seem to me to show more feeling about this than I ever supposed you could possibly be capable of. Are you aware that your tone is somewhat bitter, and that if I were sensitive I might feel hurt? Do you mean by what you said to lay any blame to me?"

She spoke so sadly and reproachfully that Zillah's heart smote her. At once her disappointment and vexation vanished at the thought that she had spoken unkindly to her friend.

"Hilda!" she cried, "you can not think that I am capable of such ingratitude. You have most generously given me your services all this time. You have been right, from the very first, and I have been wrong. You have taken a world of trouble to obviate the difficulties which my own obstinacy and temper have caused. If any trouble could possibly arise, I only could be to blame. But, after all, none can arise. I'm sure Captain Molyneux will very readily believe that I disliked him too much when he first went away to dream of writing to him. He certainly had every reason for thinking so."

"Shall you tell him that?" said Hilda, mildly, without referring to Zillah's apologies.

"Certainly I shall," said Zillah, "if the opportunity ever arises. The simple truth is always the easiest and the best. I think he is already as well aware as he can be of that fact; and, after all, why should I, or how could I, have liked him under the circumstances? I knew nothing of him whatever; and every thing—yes, every thing, was against him."

"You know no more of him now," said Hilda; "and yet, though you are very reticent on the subject, I have a shrewd suspicion, my darling, that you do not dislike him."

As she spoke she looked earnestly at Zillah as if to read her inmost soul.

Zillah was conscious of that sharp, close scrutiny, and blushed crimson, as this question which thus concerned her most sacred feelings was brought home to her so suddenly. But she answered, as lightly as she could:

"How can you say that, or even hint at it? How absurd you are, Hilda! I know no more of him now than I knew before. Of course I hear very much about him at Chetwynde, but what of that? He certainly pervades the whole atmosphere of the house. The one idea of Lord Chetwynde is Guy; and as for Mrs. Hart, I think if he wished to use her for a target she would be delighted. Death at such hands would be bliss to her. She treasures up every word he has ever spoken, from his earliest infancy to the present day."

"And I suppose that is enough to account for the charm which you seem to find in her society," rejoined Hilda. "It has rather puzzled me, I confess. For my own part I have never been able to break through the reserve which she chooses to throw around her. I can not get beyond the barest civilities with her, though I'm sure I've tried to win her good-will more than I ever tried before, which is rather strange, for, after all, there is no reason whatever why I should try any thing of the kind. She seems to have a very odd kind of feeling toward me. She looks at me sometimes so strangely that she positively gives me an uncomfortable feeling. She seems frightened to death if my dress brushes against hers. She shrinks away. I believe she is not sane. In fact, I'm sure of it."

"Poor old Mrs. Hart!" said Zillah. "I suppose she does seem a little odd to you; but I know her well, and I assure you she is as far removed from insanity as I am. Still she is undoubtedly queer. Do you know, Hilda, she seems to me to have had some terrible sorrow which has crushed all her spirit and almost her very life. I have no idea whatever of her past life. She is very reticent. She never even so much as hints at it."

"I dare say she has very good reasons," interrupted Hilda.

"Don't talk that way about her, dear Hilda. You are too ill-natured, and I can't bear to have ill-natured things said about the dear old thing. You don't know her as I do, or you would never talk so."

"Oh, Zillah—really—you feel my little pleasantries too much. It was only a thoughtless remark."

"She seems to me," said Zillah, musingly, after a thoughtful silence, "to be a very—very mysterious person. Though I love her dearly, I see that there is some mystery about her. Whatever her history may be she is evidently far above her present position, for when she does allow herself to talk she has the manner and accent of a refined lady. Yes, there is a deep mystery about her, which is utterly beyond my comprehension. I remember once when she had been talking for a long time about Guy and his wonderful qualities, I suddenly happened to ask her some trivial question about her life before she came to Chetwynde; but she looked at me so wild and frightened, that she really startled me. I was so terrified that I instantly changed the conversation, and rattled on so as to give her time to recover herself, and prevent her from discovering my feelings."

"Why, how very romantic!" said Hilda, with

a smile. "You seem, from such circumstances, to have brought yourself to consider our very prosaic housekeeper as almost a princess in disguise. I, for my part, look upon her as a very common person, so weak-minded, to say the least, as to be almost half-witted. As to her accent, that is nothing. I dare say she has seen better days. I have heard more than once of ladies in destitute or reduced circumstances who have been obliged to take to housekeeping. After all, it is not bad. I'm sure it must be far better than being a governess."

"Well, if I am romantic, you are certainly prosaic enough. At all events I love Mrs. Hart dearly. But come, Hilda, if you are going to write you must do so at once, for the letters are to be posted this afternoon."

Hilda instantly went to the desk and began her task. Zillah, however, went away. Her chagrin and disappointment were so great that she could not stay, and she even refused afterward to look at the note which Hilda showed her. In fact, after that she would never look at them at all.

Some time after this Zillah and Mrs. Hart were together on one of those frequent occasions which they made use of for confidential interviews. Somehow Zillah had turned the conversation from Guy in person to the subject of her correspondence, and gradually told all to Mrs. Hart. At this she looked deeply shocked and grieved.

"That girl," she said, "has some secret motive."

She spoke with a bitterness which Zillah had never before noticed in her.

"Secret motive!" she repeated, in wonder; "what in the world do you mean?"

"She is bad and deceitful," said Mrs. Hart, with energy; "you are trusting your life and honor in the hands of a false friend."

Zillah started back and looked at Mrs. Hart in utter wonder.

"I know," said she at last, "that you don't like Hilda, but I feel hurt when you use such language about her. She is my oldest and dearest friend. She is my sister virtually. I have known her all my life, and know her to her heart's core. She is incapable of any dishonorable action, and she loves me like herself."

All Zillah's enthusiastic generosity was aroused in defending against Mrs. Hart's charge a friend whom she so dearly loved.

Mrs. Hart sadly shook her head.

"My dear child," said she, "you know I would not hurt your feelings for the world. I am sorry. I will say nothing more about her, since you love her. But don't you feel that you are in a very false position?"

"But what can I do? There is the difficulty about the handwriting. And then it has gone on so long."

"Write to him at all hazards," said Mrs. Hart, "and tell him every thing."

Zillah shook her head.

"Well, then—will you let me?"

"How can I? No; it must be done by myself—if it ever is done; and as to writing it myself—I can not."

Such a thought was indeed abhorrent. After all it seemed to her in itself nothing. She employed an amanuensis to compose those formal notes which went in her name. And what fault was there? To Mrs. Hart, whose whole life was bound up in Guy, it was impossible to look at this matter except as to how it affected him. But Zillah had other feelings—other memories. The very proposal to write a "confession" fired her heart with stern indignation. At once all her resentment was roused. Memory brought back again in vivid colors that hideous mockery of a marriage over the death-bed of her father, with reference to which, in spite of her changed feelings, she had never ceased to think that it might have been avoided, and ought to have been. Could she stoop to confess to this man any thing whatever? Impossible!

Mrs. Hart did not know Zillah's thoughts. She supposed she was trying to find a way to extricate herself from her difficulty. So she made one further suggestion.

"Why not tell all to Lord Chetwynde? Surely you can do that easily enough. He will understand all, and explain all."

"I can not," said Zillah, coldly. "It would be doubting my friend—the loving friend who is to me the same as a sister—who is the only companion I have ever had. She is the one that I love dearest on earth, and to do any thing apart from her is impossible. You do not know her—I do—and I love her. For her I would give up every other friend."

At this Mrs. Hart looked sadly away, and then the matter of the letters ended. It was never again brought up.

CHAPTER XIII.

POMEROY COURT REVISITED.

Over a year had passed away since Zillah had come to live at Chetwynde Castle, and she had come at length to find her new home almost as dear to her as the old one. Still that old home was far from being forgotten. At first she never mentioned it; but at length, as the year approached its close, there came over her a great longing to revisit the old place, so dear to her heart and so well remembered. She hinted to Lord Chetwynde what her desires were, and the Earl showed unfeigned delight at finding that Zillah's grief had become so far mitigated as to allow her to think of such a thing. So he urged her by all means to go.

"But of course you can't go just yet," said he. "You must wait till May, when the place will be at its best. Just now, at the end of March, it will be too cold and damp."

"And you will go with me—will you not?" pleaded Zillah.

"If I can, my child; but you know very well that I am not able to stand the fatigue of traveling."

"Oh, but you must make an effort and try to stand it this time. I can not bear to go away and leave you behind."

Lord Chetwynde looked affectionately down at the face which was upturned so lovingly toward his, and promised to go if he could. So the weeks passed away; but when May came he had a severe attack of gout, and though Zillah waited through all the month, until the severity of the disease had relaxed, yet the Earl did not

find himself able to undertake such a journey. Zillah was therefore compelled either to give up the visit or else to go without him. She decided to do the latter. Roberts accompanied her, and her maid Mathilde. Hilda too, of course, went with her, for to her it was as great a pleasure as to Zillah to visit the old place, and Zillah would not have dreamed of going any where without her.

Pomeroy Court looked very much as it had looked while Zillah was living there. It had been well and even scrupulously cared for. The grounds around showed marks of the closest attention. Inside, the old housekeeper, who had remained after the General's death, with some servants, had preserved every thing in perfect order, and in quite the same state as when the General was living. This perfect preservation of the past struck Zillah most painfully. As she entered, the intermediate period of her life at Chetwynde seemed to fade away. It was to her as though she were still living in her old home. She half expected to see the form of her father in the hall. The consciousness of her true position was violently forced upon her. With the sharpness of the impression which was made upon her by the unchanged appearance of the old home, there came another none less sharp. If Pomeroy Court brought back to her the recollection of the happy days once spent there, but now gone forever, it also brought to her mind the full consciousness of her loss. To her it was *infandum renovare dolorem*. She walked in a deep melancholy through the dear familiar rooms. She lingered in profound abstraction and in the deepest sadness over the mournful reminders of the past. She looked over all the old home objects, stood in the old places, and sat in the old seats. She walked in silence through all the house, and finally went to her own old room, so loved, so well remembered. As she crossed the threshold and looked around she felt her strength give way. A great sob escaped her, and sinking into a chair where she once used to sit in happier days, she gave herself up to her recollections. For a long time she lost herself in these. Hilda had left her to herself, as though her delicacy had prompted her not to intrude upon her friend at such a moment; and Zillah thought of this with a feeling of grateful affection. At length she resumed to some degree her calmness, and summoning up all her strength, she went at last to the chamber where that dread scene had been enacted—that scene which seemed to her a double tragedy—that scene which had burned itself in her memory, combining the horror of the death of her dearest friend with the ghastly farce of a forced and unhallowed marriage. In that place a full tide of misery rushed over her soul. She broke down utterly. Chetwynde Castle, the Earl, Mrs. Hart, all were forgotten. The past faded away utterly. This only was her true home—this place darkened by a cloud which might never be dispelled.

"Oh, papa! Oh, papa!" she moaned, and flung herself upon the bed where he had breathed his last.

But her sorrow now, though overwhelming, had changed from its old vehemence. This change had been wrought in Zillah—the old, unreasoning passion had left her. A real affliction had brought out, by its gradual renovating and creative force, all the good that was in her. That the uses of adversity are sweet, is a hackneyed Shakspeareanism, but it is forever true, and nowhere was its truth more fully displayed than here. Formerly it happened that an ordinary check in the way of her desires was sufficient to send her almost into convulsions; but now, in the presence of her great calamity, she had learned to bear with patience all the ordinary ills of life. Her father had spoiled her; by his death she had become regenerate.

This tendency of her nature toward a purer and loftier standard was intensified by her visit to Pomeroy Court. Over her spirit there came a profounder earnestness, caught from the solemn scenes in the midst of which she found herself. Sorrow had subdued and quieted the wild impulsive motions of her soul. This renewal of that sorrow in the very place of its birth, deepened the effect of its first presence. This visit did more for her intellectual and spiritual growth than the whole past year at Chetwynde Castle.

They spent about a month here. Zillah, who had formerly been so talkative and restless, now showed plainly the fullness of the change that had come over her. She had grown into a life far more serious and thoughtful than any which she had known before. She had ceased to be a giddy and unreasoning girl. She had become a calm, grave, thoughtful woman. But her calmness and gravity and thoughtfulness were all underlaid and interpenetrated by the fervid vehemence of her intense Oriental nature. Beneath the English exterior lay, deep within her, the Hindu blood. She was of that sort which can be calm in ordinary life—so calm as to conceal utterly all ordinary workings of the fretful soul; but which, in the face of any great excitement, or in the presence of any great wrong, will be all

overwhelmed and transformed into a furious tornado of passionate rage.

Zillah, thus silent and meditative, and so changed from her old self, might well have awakened the wonder of her friend. But whatever Hilda may have thought, and whatever wonder she may have felt, she kept it all to herself; for she was naturally reticent, and so secretive that she never expressed in words any feelings which she might have about things that went on around her. If Zillah chose to stay by herself, or to sit in her company without speaking a word, it was not in Hilda to question her or to remonstrate with her. She rather chose to accommodate herself to the temper of her friend. She could also be meditative and profoundly silent. While Zillah had been talkative, she had talked with her; now, in her silence, she rivaled her as well. She could follow Zillah in all her moods.

At the end of a month they returned to Chetwynde Castle, and resumed the life which they had been leading there. Zillah's new mood seemed to Hilda, and to others also, to last much longer than any one of those many moods in which she had indulged before. But this proved to be more than a mood. It was a change.

The promise which she had given to the Earl she had tried to fulfill most conscientiously. She really had striven as much as possible to "study." That better understanding, born of affection, which had arisen between them, had formed a new motive within her, and rendered her capable of something like application. But it was not until after her visit to Pomeroy Court that she showed any effort that was at all adequate to the purpose before her. The change that then came over her seemed to have given her a new control over herself. And so it was that, at last, the hours devoted to her studies were filled up by efforts that were really earnest, and also really effective.

Under these circumstances, it happened that Zillah began at last to engross Gualtier's attention altogether, during the whole of the time allotted to her; and if he had sought ever so earnestly, he could not have found any opportunity for a private interview with Hilda. What her wishes might be was not visible; for, whether she wished it or not, she did not, in any way, show it. She was always the same—calm, cool, civil, as her music-teacher, and devoted to her own share of the studies. Those little "asides" in which they had once indulged were now out of the question; and, even if a favorable occasion had arisen, Gualtier would not have ventured upon the undertaking. He, for his part, could not possibly know her thoughts: whether she was still cherishing her old designs, or had given them up altogether. He could only stifle his impatience, and wait, and watch, and wait. But how was it with her? Was she, too, watching and waiting for some opportunity? He thought so. But with what aim, or for what purpose? That was the puzzle. Yet that there was something on her mind which she wished to communicate to him he knew well; for it had at last happened that Hilda had changed in some degree from her cool and undemonstrative manner. He encountered sometimes—or thought that he encountered—an earnest glance which she threw at him, on greeting him, full of meaning, which told him this most plainly. It seemed to him to say: Wait, wait, wait; when the time comes, I have that to say which you will be glad to learn. What it might be he knew not, nor could he conjecture; but he thought that it might still refer to the secret of that mysterious cipher which had baffled them both.

Thus these two watched and waited. Months passed away, but no opportunity for an interview arose. Of course, if Hilda had been reckless, or if it had been absolutely necessary to have one, she could easily have arranged it. The park was wide, full of lonely paths and sequestered retreats, where meetings could have been had, quite free from all danger of observation or interruption. She needed only to slip a note into his hand, telling him to meet her at some place there, and he would obey her will. But Hilda did not choose to do any thing of the kind. Whatever she did could only be done by her in strict accordance with *les convenances*. She would have waited for months before she would consent to compromise herself so far as to solicit a stolen interview. It was not the dread of discovery, however, that deterred her; for, in a place like Chetwynde, that need not have been feared, and if she had been so disposed, she could have had an interview with Gualtier every week, which no one would have found out. The thing which deterred her was something very different from this. It was her own pride. She could not humble herself so far as to do this. Such an act would be to descend from the position which she at present occupied in his eyes. To compromise herself, or in any way put herself in his power, was impossible for one like her.

It was not, however, from any thing like moral cowardice that she held aloof from making an interview with him; nor was it from any thing like conscientious scruples; nor yet from maidenly modesty. It arose, most of all, from pride, and also from a profound perception of the advantages enjoyed by one who fulfilled all that might be demanded by the proprieties of life. Her aim was to see Gualtier under circumstances that were unimpeachable—in the room where he had a right to come. To do more than this might lower herself in his eyes, and make him presumptuous.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEW DISCOVERIES.

At last the opportunity came for which they had waited so long.

For many months Zillah's application to her studies had been incessant, and the Earl began to notice signs of weariness in her. His conscience smote him, and his anxiety was aroused. He had recovered from his gout, and as he felt particularly well he determined to take Zillah on a long drive, thinking that the change would be beneficial to her. He began to fear that he had brought too great a pressure to bear on her, and that she in her new-born zeal for study might carry her self-devotion too far, and do some injury to her health. Hilda declined going, and Zillah and the Earl started off for the day.

On that day Gualtier came at his usual hour. On looking round the room he saw no signs of

Zillah, and his eyes brightened as they fell on Hilda.

"Mrs. Molyneux," said she, after the usual civilities, "has gone out for a drive. She will not take her lesson to-day."

"Ah, well, shall I wait till your hour arrives, or will you take your lesson now?"

"Oh, you need not wait," said Hilda; "I will take my lesson now. I think I will appropriate both hours."

There was a glance of peculiar meaning in Hilda's eyes which Gualtier noticed, but he cast his eyes meekly upon the floor. He had an idea that the long looked for revelation was about to be given, but he did not attempt to hasten it in any way. He was afraid that any expression of eagerness on his part might repel Hilda, and, therefore, he would not endanger his position by asking for any thing, but rather waited to receive what she might voluntarily offer.

Hilda, however, was not at all anxious to be asked. Now that she could converse with Gualtier, and not compromise herself, she had made up her mind to give him her confidence. It was safe to talk to this man in this room. The servants were few. They were far away. No one would dream of trying to listen. They were sitting close together near the piano.

"I have something to say to you," said Hilda at last.

Gualtier looked at her with earnest inquiry, but said nothing.

"You remember, of course, what we were talking about the last time we spoke to one another?"

"Of course, I have never forgotten that."

"It was nearly two years ago," said Hilda, "At one time I did not expect that such a conversation could ever be renewed. With the General's death all need for it seemed to be destroyed. But now that need seems to have arisen again."

"Have you ever deciphered the paper?" asked Gualtier.

"Not more than before," said Hilda. "But I have made a discovery of the very greatest importance; something which entirely confirms my former suspicions gathered from the cipher. They are additional papers which I will show you presently, and then you will see whether I am right or not. I never expected to find any thing of the kind. I found them quite by chance, while I was half mechanically carrying out my old idea. After the General's death I lost all interest in the matter for some time, for there seemed before me no particular inducement to go on with it. But this discovery has changed the whole aspect of the affair."

"What was it that you found?" asked Gualtier, who was full of curiosity. "Was it the key to the cipher, or was it a full explanation, or was it something different?"

"They were certain letters and business papers. I will show them to you presently. But before doing so I want to begin at the beginning. The whole of that cipher is perfectly familiar to me, all its difficulties are as insurmountable as ever, and before I show you these new papers I want to refresh your memory about the old ones.

"You remember, first of all," said she, "the peculiar character of that cipher writing, and of my interpretation. The part that I deciphered seemed to be set in the other like a wedge, and while this was decipherable the other was not."

Gualtier nodded.

"Now I want you to read again the part that I deciphered," said Hilda, and she handed him a piece of paper on which something was written. Gualtier took it and read the following, which the reader has already seen. Each sentence was numbered.

1. *Oh may God have mercy on my wretched soul Amen*
2. *O Pomeroy forged a hundred thousand dollars*
3. *O N Pomeroy eloped with poor Lady Chetwynde*
4. *She acted out of a mad impulse in flying*
5. *She listened to me and ran off with me*
6. *She was piqued at her husband's act*
7. *Fell in with Lady Mary Chetwynd*
8. *Expelled the army for gaming*
9. *N Pomeroy of Pomeroy Berks*
10. *O I am a miserable villain*

Gualtier looked over it and then handed it back.

"Yes," said he, "I remember, of course, for I happen to know every word of it by heart."

"That is very well," said Hilda, approvingly. "And now I want to remind you of the difficulties in my interpretation before going on any further.

"You remember that these were, first, the confusion in the way of writing the name, for here there is 'O Pomeroy,' 'O N Pomeroy,' and 'N Pomeroy,' in so short a document.

"Next, there is the mixture of persons, the writer sometimes speaking in the first person and sometimes in the third, as, for instance, when he says, '*O N Pomeroy* eloped with poor Lady Chetwynde;' and then he says, 'She listened to *me* and ran off with me.'

"And then there are the incomplete sentences, such as, 'Fell in with Lady Mary Chetwynd'—'Expelled the army for gaming.'

"Lastly, there are two ways in which the lady's name is spelled, 'Chetwynde,' and 'Chetwynd.'

"You remember we decided that these might be accounted for in one of two ways. Either, first, the writer, in copying it out, grew confused in forming his cipher characters; or, secondly, he framed the whole paper with a deliberate purpose to baffle and perplex."

"I remember all this," said Gualtier, quietly. "I have not forgotten it."

"The General's death changed the aspect of affairs so completely," said Hilda, "and made this so apparently useless, that I thought you might have forgotten at least these minute particulars. It is necessary for you to have these things fresh in your mind, so as to regard the whole subject thoroughly."

"But what good will any discovery be now?" asked Gualtier, with unfeigned surprise. "The General is dead, and you can do nothing."

"The General is dead," said Hilda; "but the General's daughter lives."

Nothing could exceed the bitterness of the tone in which she uttered these words.

"His daughter! Of what possible concern can all this be to her?" asked Gualtier, who wished to get at the bottom of Hilda's purpose.

"I should never have tried to strike at the General," said Hilda, "if he had not had a daughter. It was not him that I wished to harm. It was *her*."

"And now," said Gualtier, after a silence,

"she is out of your reach. She is Mrs. Molyneux. She will be the Countess of Chetwynde. How can she be harmed?"

As he spoke he looked with a swift interrogative glance at Hilda, and then turned away his eyes.

"True," said Hilda, cautiously and slowly; "she is beyond my reach. Besides, you will observe that I was speaking of the past. I was telling what I wished—not what I wish."

"That is precisely what I understood," said Gualtier. "I only asked so as to know how your wishes now inclined. I am anxious to serve you in any way."

"So you have said before, and I take you at your word," said Hilda, calmly. "I have once before reposed confidence in you, and I intend to do so again."

Gualtier bowed, and murmured some words of grateful acknowledgment.

"My work now," said Hilda, without seeming to notice him, "is one of investigation. I merely wish to get to the bottom of a secret. It is to this that I have concluded to invite your assistance."

"You are assured of that already, Miss Krieff," said Gualtier, in a tone of deep devotion. "Call it investigation, or call it any thing you choose, if you deign to ask my assistance I will do any thing and dare any thing."

Hilda laughed harshly.

"In truth," said she, dryly, "this does not require much daring, but it may cause trouble—it may also take up valuable time. I do not ask for any risks, but rather for the employment of the most ordinary qualities. Patience and perseverance will do all that I wish to have done."

"I am sorry, Miss Krieff, that there is nothing more than this. I should prefer to go on some enterprise of danger for your sake."

He laid a strong emphasis on these last words, but Hilda did not seem to notice it. She continued, in a calm tone:

"All this is talking in the dark. I must explain myself instead of talking round about the subject. To begin, then. Since our last interview I could find out nothing whatever that tended to throw any light on that mysterious cipher writing. Why it was written, or why it should be so carefully preserved, I could not discover. The General's death seemed to make it useless, and so for a long time I ceased to think about it. It was only on my last visit to Pomeroy Court that it came to my mind. That was six or eight months ago.

"On going there Mrs. Molyneux gave herself up to grief, and scarcely ever spoke a word. She was much by herself, and brooded over her sorrows. She spent much time in her father's room, and still more time in solitary walks about the grounds. I was much by myself. Left thus alone, I rambled about the house, and one day happened to go to the General's study. Here every thing remained almost exactly as it used to be. It was here that I found the cipher writing, and, on visiting it again, the circumstances of that discovery naturally suggested themselves to my mind."

Hilda had warmed with her theme, and spoke with something like recklessness, as though she was prepared at last to throw away every scruple and make a full confidence. The allusion to the discovery of the cipher was a reminder to herself and to Gualtier of her former dishonorable conduct. Having once more touched upon this, it was easier for her to reveal new treachery upon her part. Nevertheless she paused for a moment, and looked with earnest scrutiny upon her companion. He regarded her with a look of silent devotion which seemed to express any degree of subserviency to her interests, and disarmed every suspicion. Reassured by this, she continued:

"It happened that I began to examine the General's papers. It was quite accidental, and arose merely from the fact that I had nothing else to do. It was almost mechanical on my part. At any rate I opened the desk, and found it full of documents of all kinds which had been apparently undisturbed for an indefinite period. Naturally enough I examined the drawer in which I had found the cipher writing, and was able to do so quite at my leisure. On first opening it I found only some business papers. The cipher was no longer there. I searched among all the other papers to find it, but in vain. I then concluded that he had destroyed it. For several days I continued to examine that desk, but with no result. It seemed to fascinate me. At last, however, I came to the conclusion that nothing more could be discovered.

"All this time Mrs. Molyneux left me quite to myself, and my search in the desk and my discouragement were altogether unknown to her. After about a week I gave up the desk and tore myself away. Still I could not keep away from it, and at the end of another week I returned to the search. This time I went with the intention of examining all the drawers, to see if there was not some additional place of concealment.

"It is not necessary for me to describe to you minutely the various trials which I made. It is quite enough for me now to say that I at last found out that in that very private drawer where I had first discovered the cipher writing there was a false bottom of very peculiar construction. It lay close to the real bottom, fitting in very nicely, and left room only for a few thin papers. The false bottom and the real bottom were so thin that no one could suspect any thing of the kind. Something about the position of the drawer led me to examine it minutely, and the idea of a false bottom came to my mind. I could not find out the secret of it, and it was only by the very rude process of prying at it with a knife that I at length made the discovery."

She paused.

"And did you find any thing?" said Gualtier, eagerly.

"I did."

"Papers?"

"Yes. The old cipher writing was there—shut up—concealed carefully, jealously—doubly concealed, in fact. Was not this enough to show that it had importance in the eyes of the man who had thus concealed it? It must be so. Nothing but a belief in its immense importance could possibly have led to such extraordinary pains in the concealment of it. This I felt, and this conviction only intensified my desire to get at the bottom of the mystery which it incloses. And this much I saw plainly—that the deciphering which I have made carries in itself so dread a confession, that the man who made it would willingly

"THE OLD CIPHER WRITING WAS THERE."

conceal it both in cipher writing and in secret drawers."

"But of course," said Gualtier, taking advantage of a pause, "you found something else besides the cipher. With that you were already familiar."

"Yes, and it is this that I am going to tell you about. There were some papers which had evidently been there for a long time, kept there in the same place with the cipher writing. When I first found them I merely looked hastily over them, and then folded them all up together, and took them away so as to examine them in my own room at leisure. On looking over them I found the names which I expected occurring frequently. There was the name of O. N. Pomeroy and the name of Lady Chetwynde. In addition to these there was another name, and a very singular one. The name is Obed Chute, and seems to me to be an American name. At any rate the owner of it lived in America."

"Obed Chute," repeated Gualtier, with the air of one who is trying to fasten something on his memory.

"Yes; and he seems to have lived in New York."

"What was the nature of the connection which he had with the others?"

"I should conjecture that he was a kind of guide, philosopher, and friend, with a little of the agent and commission-merchant," replied Hilda. "But it is impossible to find out any thing in particular about him from the meagre letters which I obtained. I found nothing else except these papers, though I searched diligently. Every thing is contained here. I have them, and I intend to show them to you without any further delay."

Saying this Hilda drew some papers from her pocket, and handed them to Gualtier.

On opening them Gualtier found first a paper covered with cipher writing. It was the same which Hilda had copied, and the characters were familiar to him from his former attempt to decipher them. The paper was thick and coarse, but Hilda had copied the characters very faithfully.

The next paper was a receipt written out on a small sheet which was yellow with age, while the ink had faded into a pale brown:

"$100,000. NEW YORK, *May* 10, 1840.

"Received from O. N. Pomeroy the sum of one hundred thousand dollars in payment for my claim.

"OBED CHUTE."

nature of the connection
others?"
e that he was a kind of
l friend, with a little of
ission-merchant," replied
possible to find out any
ut him from the meagre
d. I found nothing else
ough I searched diligent-
ontained here. I have
how them to you without

w some papers from her
m to Gualtier.
altier found first a paper
iting. It was the same
, and the characters were
is former attempt to de-
was thick and coarse, but
naracters very faithfully.
receipts written out on a
ellow with age, while the
e brown:

New York, *May* 10, 1840.
omeroy the sum of one hun-
ayment for my claim.
"Obed Chute."

It was a singular document in every respect; but the mention of the sum of money seemed to confirm the statement gathered from the cipher writing.

The next document was a letter:

"New York, *August* 23, 1840.

"Dear Sir,—I take great pleasure in informing you that L. C. has experienced a change, and is now slowly recovering. I assure you that no pains shall be spared to hasten her cure. The best that New York can afford is at her service. I hope soon to acquaint you with her entire recovery. Until then, believe me,

"Yours truly, Obed Chute.

"Capt. O. N. Pomeroy."

The next paper was a letter written in a lady's hand. It was very short:

"New York, *September* 20, 1840.

"Farewell, dearest friend and more than brother. After a long sickness I have at last recovered through the mercy of God and the kindness of Mr. Chute. We shall never meet again on earth; but I will pray for your happiness till my latest breath. Mary Chetwynde."

There was only one other. It was a letter also, and was as follows:

"New York, *October* 10, 1840.

"Dear Sir,—I have great pleasure in informing you that your friend L. C. has at length entirely recovered. She is very much broken down, however; her hair is quite gray, and she looks twenty years older. She is deeply penitent and profoundly sad. She is to leave me to-morrow, and will join the Sisters of Charity. You will feel with me that this is best for herself and for all. I remain yours, very truly,

"Obed Chute.

"Capt. O. N. Pomeroy."

Gualtier read these letters several times in deep and thoughtful silence. Then he sat in profound thought for some time.

"Well," said Hilda at length, with some impatience, "what do you think of these?"

"What do *you* think?" asked Gualtier.

"I?" returned Hilda. "I will tell you what I think; and as I have brooded over these for eight months now, I can only say that I am more confirmed than ever in my first impressions. To me, then, these papers seem to point out two great facts—the first being that of the forgery; and the second that of the elopement. Beyond this I see something else. The forgery has been arranged by the payment of the amount. The elopement also has come to a miserable termination. Lady Chetwynde seems to have been deserted by her lover, who left her perhaps in New York. She fell ill, very ill, and suffered so that on her recovery she had grown in appearance twenty years older. Broken-hearted, she did not dare to go back to her friends, but joined the Sisters of Charity. She is no doubt dead long ago. As to this Chute, he seems to me perhaps to have been a kind of tool of the lover, who employed him probably to settle his forgery business, and also to take care of the unhappy woman whom he had ruined and deserted. He wrote these few letters to keep the recreant lover informed about her fate. In the midst of these there is the last despairing farewell of the unhappy creature herself. All these the conscience-stricken lover has carefully preserved. In addition to these, no doubt for the sake of easing his conscience, he wrote out a confession of his sin. But he was too great a coward to write it out plainly, and therefore wrote it in cipher. I believe that he would have destroyed them all if he had found time; but his accident came too quickly for this, and he has left these papers as a legacy to the discoverer."

As Hilda spoke Gualtier gazed at her with unfeigned admiration.

"You are right," said he. "Every word that you speak is as true as fate. You have penetrated to the very bottom of this secret. I believe that this is the true solution. Your genius has solved the mystery."

"The mystery," repeated Hilda, who showed no emotion whatever at the fervent admiration of Gualtier—"the mystery is as far from solution as ever."

"Have you not solved it?"

"Certainly not. Mine, after all, are merely conjectures. Much more remains to be done. In the first place, I must find out something about Lady Chetwynde. For months I have tried, but in vain. I have ventured as far as I dared to question the people about here. Once I hinted to Mrs. Hart something about the elopement, and she turned upon me with that in her eyes which would have turned an ordinary mortal into stone. Fortunately for me, I bore it, and survived. But since that unfortunate question she shuns me more than ever. The other servants know nothing, or else they will reveal nothing. Nothing, in fact, can be discovered here. The mystery is yet to be explained, and the explanation must be sought elsewhere."

"Where?"

"I don't know."

"Have you thought of any thing? You must have, or you would not have communicated with me. There is some work which you wish me to do. You have thought about it, and have determined it. What is it? Is it to go to America? Shall I hunt up Obed Chute? Shall I search through the convents till I find that Sister who once was Lady Chetwynde? Tell me. If you say so I will go."

Hilda mused; then she spoke, as though rather to herself than to her companion.

"I don't know. I have no plans—no definite aim, beyond a desire to find out what it all means, and what there is in it. What can I do? What could I do if I found out all? I really do not know. If General Pomeroy were alive, it might be possible to extort from him a confession of his crimes, and make them known to the world."

"If General Pomeroy were alive," interrupted Gualtier, "and were to confess all his crimes, what good would that do?"

"What good?" cried Hilda, in a tone of far greater vehemence and passion than any which had yet escaped her. "What good? Humiliation, sorrow, shame, anguish, for his daughter! It is not on his head that I wish these to descend, but on hers. You look surprised. You wonder why? I will not tell you—not now, at least. It is not because she is passionate and disagreeable; that is a trifle, and besides she has

changed from that; it is not because she ever injured me—she never injured me; she loves me; but"—and Hilda's brow grew dark, and her eyes flashed as she spoke—"there are other reasons, deeper than all this—reasons which I will not divulge even to you, but which yet are sufficient to make me long and yearn and crave for some opportunity to bring down her proud head into the very dust."

"And that opportunity shall be yours," cried Gualtier, vehemently. "To do this it is only necessary to find out the whole truth. I will find it out. I will search over all England and all America till I discover all that you want to know. General Pomeroy is dead. What matter? He is nothing to you. But she lives, and is a mark for your vengeance."

"I have said more than I intended to," said Hilda, suddenly resuming her coolness. "At any rate, I take you at your word. If you want money, I can supply it."

"Money?" said Gualtier, with a light laugh. "No, no. It is something far more than that which I want. When I have succeeded in my search I will tell you. To tell it now would be premature. But when shall I start? Now?"

"Oh no," said Hilda, who showed no emotion one way or the other at the hint which he had thrown out. "Oh no, do nothing suddenly. Wait until your quarter is up. When will it be out?"

"In six weeks. Shall I wait?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, in six weeks I will go."

"Very well."

"And if I don't succeed I shall never come back."

Hilda was silent.

"Is it arranged, then?" said Gualtier, after a time."

"Yes; and now I will take my music lesson."

And Hilda walked over to the piano.

After this interview no further opportunity occurred. Gualtier came every day as before. In a fortnight he gave notice to the Earl that pressing private engagements would require his departure. He begged leave to recommend a friend of his, Mr. Hilaire. The Earl had an interview with Gualtier, and courteously expressed his regret at his departure, asking him at the same time to write to Mr. Hilaire and get him to come. This Gualtier promised to do.

Shortly before the time of Gualtier's departure Mr. Hilaire arrived. Gualtier took him to the Castle, and he was recognized as the new teacher.

In a few days Gualtier took his departure.

CHAPTER XV.

FROM GIRLHOOD TO WOMANHOOD.

One evening Zillah was sitting with Lord Chetwynde in his little sanctum. His health had not been good of late, and sometimes attacks of gout were superadded. At this time he was confined to his room.

Zillah was dressed for dinner, and had come to sit with him until the second bell rang. She had been with him constantly during his confinement to his room. At this time she was seated on a low stool near the fire, which threw its glow over her face, and lit up the vast masses of her jet-black hair. Neither of them had spoken for some time, when Lord Chetwynde, who had been looking steadily at her for some minutes, said, abruptly:

"Zillah, I'm sure Guy will not know you when he comes back."

She looked up laughingly.

"Why, father? I think every lineament on my face must be stereotyped on his memory."

"That is precisely the reason why I say that he will not know you. I could not have imagined that three years could have so thoroughly altered any one."

"It's only fine feathers," said Zillah, shaking her head. "You must allow that Mathilde is incomparable. I often feel that were she to have the least idea of the appearance which I presented, when I first came here, there would be nothing left for me but suicide. I could not survive her contempt. I was always fond of finery. I have Indian blood enough for that; but when I remember my combinations of colors, it really makes me shudder; and my hair was always streaming over my shoulders in a manner more *negligé* than becoming."

"I do Mathilde full justice," returned Lord Chetwynde. "Your toilette and coiffure are now irreproachable; but even her power has its limits, and she could scarcely have turned the sallow, awkward girl into a lovely and graceful woman."

Zillah, who was unused to flattery, blushed very red at this tribute to her charms, and answered, quickly:

"Whatever change there may be is entirely due to Monmouthshire. Devonshire never agreed with me. I should have been ill and delicate to this day if I had remained there; and as to sallowness, I must plead guilty to that. I remember a lemon-colored silk I had, in which it was impossible to tell where the dress ended and my neck began. But, after all, father, you are a very prejudiced judge. Except that I am healthy now, and well dressed, I think I am very much the same personally as I was three years ago. In character, however, I feel that I have altered."

"No," he replied; "I have been looking at you for the last few minutes with perfectly unprejudiced eyes, trying to see you as a stranger would, and as Guy will when he returns. And now," he added, laughingly, "you shall be punished for your audacity in doubting my powers of discrimination, by having a full inventory given you. We will begin with the figure—about the middle height, perhaps a little under it, slight and graceful; small and beautifully proportioned head; well set on the shoulders; complexion no longer sallow or lemon-colored, but clear, bright, transparent olive; hair, black as night, and glossy as—"

But here he was interrupted by Zillah, who suddenly flung her arms about his neck, and the close proximity of the face which he was describing impeded further utterance.

"Hush, father," said she; "I won't hear another word, and don't you dare to talk about ever looking at me with unprejudiced eyes. I want you to love me without seeing my faults."

"But would you not rather that I saw your failings, Zillah, than that I clothed you with an ideal perfection?"

"No; I don't care for the love that is always looking out for faults, and has a 'but' even at the tenderest moments. That is not the love I give. Perhaps strangers might not think dear papa, and you, and Hilda absolutely perfect; but I can not see a single flaw, and I should hate myself if I could."

Lord Chetwynde kissed her fondly, but sighed as he answered:

"My child, you know nothing of the world. I fear life has some very bitter lessons in store for you before you will learn to read it aright, and form a just estimate of the characters of the people among whom you are thrown."

"But you surely would not have me think people bad until I have proved them to be so. Life would not be worth having if one must live in a constant state of suspicion."

"No, nor would I have you think all whom you love to be perfect. Believe me, my child, you will meet with but few friends in the world. Honor is an exploded notion, belonging to a past generation."

"You may be right, father, but I do not like the doctrine; so I shall go on [illegible]g in people until I find them to be dif[illegible]m what I thought."

"I should say to you, do so, dear—believe as long as you can, and as much as you can; but the danger of that is when you find that those whom you have trusted do not come up to the standard which you have formed. After two or three disappointments you will fall into the opposite extreme, think every one bad, and not believe in any thing or any body."

"I should die before I should come to that," cried Zillah, passionately. "If what you say is true, I had better not let myself like any body." Then, laughing up in his face, she added: "By-the-way, I wonder if you are safe. You see you have made me so skeptical that I shall begin by suspecting my tutor. No, don't speak," she went on, in a half-earnest, half-mocking manner, and put her hand before his mouth. "The case is hopeless, as far as you are concerned. The warning has come too late. I love you as I thought I should never love any one after dear papa."

Lord Chetwynde smiled, and pressed her fondly to his breast.

The steady change which had been going on in Zillah, in mind and in person, was indeed sufficient to justify Lord Chetwynde's remark. Enough has been said already about her change in personal appearance. Great as this was, however, it was not equal to that more subtle change which had come over her soul. Her nature was intense, vehement, passionate; but its development was of such a kind that she was now earnest where she was formerly impulsive, and calm where she had been formerly weak. A profound depth of feeling already was made manifest in this rich nature, and the thoughtfulness of the West was added to the fine emotional sensibility of the East; forming by their union a being of rare susceptibility, and of quick yet deep feeling, who still could control those feelings, and smother them, even though the concealed passion should consume like a fire within her.

Three years had passed since her hasty and repugnant marriage, and those years had been eventful in many ways. They had matured the wild, passionate, unruly girl into the woman full of sensibility and passion. They had also been filled with events upon which the world gazed in awe, which shook the British empire to its centre, and sent a thrill of horror to the heart of that empire, followed by a fierce thirst for vengeance. For the Indian mutiny had broken out, the horrors of Cawnpore had been enacted, the stories of sepoy atrocity had been told by every English fireside, and the whole nation had roused itself to send forth armies for vengeance and for punishment. Dread stories were these for the quiet circle at Chetwynde Castle; yet they had been spared its worst pains. Guy had been sent to the north of India, and had not been witness of the scenes of Cawnpore. He had been joined with those soldiers who had been summoned together to march on Delhi, and he had shared in the danger and in the final triumph of that memorable expedition.

The intensity of desire and the agony of impatience which attended his letters were natural. Lord Chetwynde thought only of one thing for many months, and that was his son's letters. At the outbreak of the mutiny, a dread anxiety had taken possession of him lest his son might be in danger. At first the letters came regularly, giving details of the mutiny as he heard them. Then there was a long break, for the army was on the march to Delhi. Then a letter came from the British camp before Delhi, which roused Lord Chetwynde from the lowest depths of despair to joy and exultation and hope. Then there was another long interval, in which the Earl, sick with anxiety, began to anticipate the worst, and was fast sinking into despondency, until, at last, a letter came, which raised him up in an instant to the highest pitch of exultation and triumph. Delhi was taken. Guy had distinguished himself, and was honorably mentioned in the dispatches. He had been among the first to scale the walls and penetrate into the beleaguered city. All had fallen into their hands. The great danger which had impended had been dissipated, and vengeance had been dealt out to those whose hands were red with English blood. Guy's letter, from beginning to end, was one long note of triumph. Its enthusiastic tone, coming, as it did, after a long period of anxiety, completely overcame the Earl. Though naturally the least demonstrative of men, he was now overwhelmed by the full tide of his emotions. He burst into tears, and wept for some time tears of joy. Then he rose, and walking over to Zillah, he kissed her, and laid his hand solemnly upon her head.

"My daughter," said he, "thank God that your husband is preserved to you through the perils of war, and that he is saved to you, and will come to you in safety and in honor."

The Earl's words sank deeply into Zillah's heart. She said nothing, but bowed her head in silence.

Living, as she did, where Guy's letters formed the chief delight of him whom she loved as a father, it would have been hard indeed for a generous nature like hers to refrain from sharing his feelings. Sympathy with his anxiety and his joy was natural, nay, inevitable. In his sorrow she was forced to console him by pointing out all that might be considered as bright in his prospects; in his joy she was forced to rejoice with him, and listen to his descriptions of Guy's ex-

ploits, as his imagination enlarged upon the more meagre facts stated in the letters. This year of anxiety and of triumph, therefore, compelled her to think very much about Guy, and, whatever her feelings were, it certainly exalted him to a prominent place in her thoughts.

And so it happened that, as month succeeded to month, she found herself more and more compelled to identify herself with the Earl, to talk to him about the idol of his heart, to share his anxiety and his joy, while all that anxiety and all that joy referred exclusively to the man who was her husband, but whom, as a husband, she had once abhorred.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AMERICAN EXPEDITION.

About three years had passed away since Zillah had first come to Chetwynde, and the life which she had lived there had gradually come to be grateful and pleasant and happy. Mr. Hilaire was attentive to his duty and devoted to his pupil, and Zillah applied herself assiduously to her music and drawing. At the end of a year Mr. Hilaire waited upon the Earl with a request to withdraw, as he wanted to go to the Continent. He informed the Earl, however, that Mr. Gualtier was coming back, and would like to get his old situation, if possible. The Earl consented to take back the old teacher; and so, in a few months more, after an absence of about a year and a half, Gualtier resumed his duties at Chetwynde Castle, *vice* Mr. Hilaire, resigned.

On his first visit after his return Hilda's face expressed an eagerness of curiosity which even her fine self-control could not conceal. No one noticed it, however, but Gualtier, and he looked at her with an earnest expression that might mean any thing or nothing. It might tell of success or failure; and so Hilda was left to conjecture. There was no chance of a quiet conversation, and she had either to wait as before, perhaps for months, until she could see him alone, or else throw away her scruples and arrange a meeting. Hilda was not long in coming to a conclusion. On Gualtier's second visit she slipped a piece of paper into his hand, on which he read, after he had left, the following:

"*I will be in the West Avenue, near the Lake, this afternoon at three o'clock.*"

That afternoon she made some excuse and went out, as she said to Zillah, for a walk through the Park. As this was a frequent thing with her, it excited no comment. The West Avenue led from the door through the Park, and finally, after a long detour, ended at the main gate. At its farthest point there was a lake, surrounded by a dense growth of Scotch larch-trees, which formed a very good place for such a tryst—although, for that matter, in so quiet a place as Chetwynde Park, they might have met on the main avenue without any fear of being noticed. Here, then, at three o'clock, Hilda went, and on reaching the spot found Gualtier waiting for her.

She walked under the shadow of the trees before she said a word.

"You are punctual," said she at last.

"I have been here ever since noon."

"You did not go out, then?"

"No, I staid here for you."

His tone expressed the deepest devotion, and his eyes, as they rested on her for a moment, had the same expression.

Hilda looked at him benignantly and encouragingly.

"You have been gone long, and I dare say you have been gone far," she said. "It is this which I want to hear about. Have you found out any thing, and what have you found out?"

"Yes, I have been gone long," said Gualtier, "and have been far away; but all the time I have done nothing else than seek after what you wish to know. Whether I have discovered any thing of any value will be for you to judge. I can only tell you of the result. At any rate you will see that I have not spared myself for your sake."

"What have you done?" asked Hilda, who saw that Gualtier's devotion was irrepressible, and would find vent in words if she did not restrain him. "I am eager to hear."

Gualtier dropped his eyes, and began to speak in a cool business tone.

"I will tell you every thing, then, Miss Krieff," said he, "from the beginning. When I left here I went first to London, for the sake of making inquiries about the elopement. I hunted up all whom I could find whose memories embraced the last twenty years, so as to see if they could throw any light on this mystery. One or two had some faint recollection of the affair, but nothing of any consequence. At length I found out an old sporting character who promised at first to be what I wished. He remembered Lady Chetwynde, described her beauty, and said that she was left to herself very much by her husband. He remembered well the excitement that was caused by her flight. He remembered the name of the man with whom she had fled. It was *Redfield Lyttoun.*"

"*Redfield Lyttoun!*" repeated Hilda, with a peculiar expression.

"Yes; but he said that, for his part, he had good reason for believing that it was an assumed name. The man who bore the name had figured for a time in sporting circles, but after this event it was generally stated that it was not his true name. I asked whether any one knew his true name. He said some people had stated it, but he could not tell. I asked what was the name. He said Pomeroy."

As Gualtier said this he raised his eyes, and those small gray orbs seemed to burn and flash with triumph as they encountered the gaze of Hilda. She said not a word, but held out her hand. Gualtier tremblingly took it, and pressed it to his thin lips.

"This was all that I could discover. It was vague; it was only partially satisfactory; but it was all. I soon perceived that it was only a waste of time to stay in London; and after thinking of many plans, I finally determined to visit the family of Lady Chetwynde herself. Of course such an undertaking had to be carried out very cautiously. I found out where the family lived, and went there. On arriving I went to the Hall, and offered myself as music-teacher. It was in an out-of-the-way place, and Sir Henry Furlong, Lady Chetwynde's brother, happened to have two or three daughters who were studying under a governess. When I showed him a certificate which the Earl here was kind enough to

"'YOU ARE PUNCTUAL,' SAID SHE AT LAST."

give me, he was very much impressed by it. He asked me all about the Earl and Chetwynde, and appeared to be delighted to hear about these things. My stars were certainly lucky. He engaged me at once, and so I had constant access to the place.

"I had to work cautiously, of course. My idea was to get hold of some of the domestics. There was an old fellow there, a kind of butler, whom I propitiated, and gradually drew into conversations about the family. My footing in the house inspired confidence in him, and he gradually became communicative. He was an old gossip, in his dotage, and he knew all about the family, and remembered when Lady Chetwynde was born. He at first avoided any allu-

sion to her, but I told him long stories about the Earl, and won upon his sympathies so that he told me at last all that the family knew about Lady Chetwynde.

"His story was this: Lord Chetwynde was busy in politics, and left his wife very much to herself. A coolness had sprung up between them, which increased every day. Lady Chetwynde was vain, and giddy, and weak. The Redfield Lyttoun of whom I had heard in London was much at her house, though her husband knew nothing about it. People were talking about them every where, and he only was in the dark. At last they ran away. It was known that they had fled to America. That is the last that was ever heard of her. She vanished out of sight, and her paramour also. Not one word has ever been heard about either of them since. From which I conjecture that Redfield Lyttoun, when he had become tired of his victim, threw her off, and came back to resume his proper name, to lead a life of honor, and to die in the odor of sanctity. What do you think of my idea?"

"It seems just," said Hilda, thoughtfully.

"In the three months which I spent there I found out all that the family could tell; but still I was far enough away from the object of my search. I only had conjectures, I wanted certainty. I thought it all over; and, at length, saw that the only thing left to do was to go to America, and try to get upon their tracks. It was a desperate undertaking; America changes so that traces of fugitives are very quickly obliterated; and who could detect or discover any after a lapse of nearly twenty years? Still, I determined to go. There seemed to be a slight chance that I might find this Obed Chute, who figures in the correspondence. There was also a chance of tracing Lady Chetwynde among the records of the Sisters of Charity. Besides, there was the chapter of accidents, in which unexpected things often turn up. So I went to America. My first search was after Obed Chute. To my amazement, I found him at once. He is one of the foremost bankers of New York, and is well known all over the city. I waited on him without delay. I had documents and certificates which I presented to him. Among others, I had written out a very good letter from Sir Henry Furlong, commissioning me to find out about his beloved sister, and another from General Pomeroy, to the effect that I was his friend—"

"That was forgery," interrupted Hilda, sharply.

Gualtier bowed with a deprecatory air, and hung his head in deep abasement.

"Go on," said she.

"You are too harsh," said he, in a pleading voice. "It was all for your sake—"

"Go on," she repeated.

"Well, with these I went to see Obed Chute. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, square-headed man, with iron-gray hair, and a face—well, it was one of those faces that make you feel that the owner can do any thing he chooses. On entering his private office I introduced myself, and began a long explanation. He interrupted me by shaking hands with me vehemently, and pushing me into a chair. I sat down, and went on with my explanation. I told him that I had come out as representative of the Furlong family, and the friend of General Pomeroy, now dead. I told him that there were several things which I wished to find out. First, to trace Lady Chetwynde, and find out what had become of her, and bring her back to her friends, if she were alive; secondly, to clear up certain charges relative to a forgery; and, finally, to find out about the fate of Redfield Lyttoun.

"Mr. Obed Chute at first was civil enough, after his rough way; but, as I spoke, he looked at me earnestly, eying me from head to foot with sharp scrutiny. He did not seem to believe my story.

"'Well,' said he, when I had ended, 'is that all?'

"'Yes,' said I.

"'So you want to find out about Lady Chetwynde, and the forgery, and Redfield Lyttoun?'

"'Yes.'

"'And General Pomeroy told you to apply to me?'

"'Yes. On his dying bed,' said I, solemnly, 'his last words were: "Go to Obed Chute, and tell him to explain all."'

"'To explain all!' repeated Obed Chute.

"'Yes,' said I. "'The confession,' said the General, "can not be made by me. He must make it."'

"'The confession!' he repeated.

"'Yes. And I suppose that you will not be unwilling to grant a dying man's request.'

"Obed Chute said nothing for some time, but sat staring at me, evidently engaged in profound thought. At any rate, he saw through and through me.

"'Young man,' said he at last, 'where are you lodging?'

"'At the Astor House,' said I, in some surprise.

"'Well, then, go back to the Astor House, pack up your trunk, pay your bill, take your fare in the first steamer, and go right straight back home. When you get there, give my compliments to Sir Henry Furlong, and tell him if he wants his sister he had better hunt her up himself. As to that affecting message which you have brought from General Pomeroy, I can only say, that, as he evidently did not explain this business to you, I certainly will not. I was only his agent. Finally, if you want to find Redfield Lyttoun, you may march straight out of that door, and look about you till you find him.'

"Saying this, he rose, opened the door, and, with a savage frown, which forbade remonstrance, motioned me out.

"I went out. There was evidently no hope of doing any thing with Obed Chute."

"Then you failed," said Hilda, in deep disappointment.

"Failed? No. Do you not see how the reticence of this Obed Chute confirms all our suspicions? But wait till you hear all, and I will tell you my conclusions. You will then see whether I have discovered any thing definite or not.

"I confess I was much discouraged at first at my reception by Obed Chute. I expected every thing from this interview, and his brutality baffled me. I did not venture back there again, of course. I thought of trying other things, and went diligently around among the convents and religious orders, to see if I could find out any thing about the fate of Lady Chetwynde. My letters of introduction from Sir H. Furlong and from Lord Chetwynde led these simple-minded

"WITH A SAVAGE FROWN HE MOTIONED ME OUT."

people to receive me with confidence. They readily seconded my efforts, and opened their records to me. For some time my search was in vain; but, at last, I found what I wanted. One of the societies of the Sisters of Charity had the name of Sister Ursula, who joined them in the year 1840. She was Lady Chetwynde. She lived with them eight years, and then disappeared. Why she had left, or where she had gone, was equally unknown. She had disappeared, and that was the end of her. After this I came home."

"And you have found out nothing more?" said Hilda, in deep disappointment.

"Nothing," said Gualtier, dejectedly; "but are you not hasty in despising what I have found out? Is not this something?"

"I do not know that you have discovered any thing but what I knew before," said Hilda, coldly. "You have made some conjectures—that is all."

"Conjectures!—no, conclusions from additional facts," said Gualtier, eagerly. "What we suspected is now, at least, more certain. The very brutality of that beast, Obed Chute, proves this. Let me tell you the conclusions that I draw from this:

"First, General Pomeroy, under an assumed name, that of Redfield Lyttoun, gained Lady Chetwynde's love, and ran away with her to America.

"Secondly, he forged a hundred thousand dollars, which forgery he hushed up through this Obed Chute, paying him, no doubt, a large sum for hush-money.

"Thirdly, he deserted Lady Chetwynde when he was tired of her, and left her in the hands of Obed Chute. She was ill, and finally, on her recovery, joined the Sisters of Charity.

"Fourthly, after eight years she ran away—perhaps to fall into evil courses and die in infamy.

"And lastly, all this must be true, or else Obed Chute would not have been so close, and would not have fired up so at the very suggestion of an explanation. If it were not true, why should he not explain? But if it be true, then there is every reason why he should not explain."

A long silence followed. Hilda was evidently deeply disappointed. From what Gualtier had said at the beginning of the interview, she had expected to hear something more definite. It seemed to her as though all his trouble had resulted in nothing. Still, she was not one to give way to disappointment, and she had too much good sense to show herself either ungrateful or ungracious.

"Your conclusions are, no doubt, correct," said she at last, in a pleasanter tone than she had yet assumed; "but they are only inferences, and can not be made use of—in the practical way in which I hoped they would be. We are still in the attitude of inquirers, you see. The secret which we hold is of such a character that we have to keep it to ourselves until it be confirmed."

Gualtier's face lighted up with pleasure as Hilda thus identified him with herself, and classed him with her as the sharer of the secret.

"Any thing," said he, eagerly—"any thing that I can do, I will do. I hope you know that you have only to say the word—"

Hilda waved her hand.

"I trust you," said she. "The time will come when you will have something to do. But just now I must wait, and attend upon circumstances. There are many things in my mind which I will not tell you—that is to say, not yet. But when the time comes, I promise to tell you. You may be interested in my plans—or you may not. I will suppose that you are."

"Can you doubt it, Miss Krieff?"

"No, I do not doubt it, and I promise you my confidence when any thing further arises."

"Can I be of no assistance now—in advising, or in counseling?" asked Gualtier, in a hesitating voice.

"No—whatever half-formed plans I may have relate to people and to things which are altogether outside of your sphere, and so you could do nothing in the way of counseling or advising."

"At least, tell me this much—must I look upon all my labor as wasted utterly? Will you at least accept it, even if it is useless, as an offering to you?"

Gualtier's pale sallow face grew paler and more sallow as he asked this; his small gray eyes twinkled with a feverish light as he turned

them anxiously upon Hilda. Hilda, for her part, regarded him with her usual calmness.

"Accept it?" said she. "Certainly, right gladly and gratefully. My friend, if I was disappointed at the result, do not suppose that I fail to appreciate the labor. You have shown rare perseverance and great acuteness. The next time you will succeed."

This approval of his labors, slight as it was, and spoken as it was, with the air of a queen, was eagerly and thankfully accepted by Gualtier. He hungered after her approval, and in his hunger he was delighted even with crumbs.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRESH DISCOVERY.

Some time passed away, and Hilda had no more interviews with Gualtier. The latter settled down into a patient, painstaking music-teacher once more, who seemed not to have an idea beyond his art. Hilda held herself aloof; and, even when she might have exchanged a few confidential words, she did not choose to do so. And Gualtier was content, and quiet, and patient.

Nearly eighteen months had passed away since Zillah's visit to Pomeroy Court, and she began to be anxious to pay another visit. She had been agitating the subject for some time; but it had been postponed from time to time, for various reasons, the chief one being the ill health of the Earl. At length, however, his health improved somewhat, and Zillah determined to take advantage of this to go.

This time, the sight of the Court did not produce so strong an effect as before. She did not feel like staying alone, but preferred having Hilda with her, and spoke freely about the past. They wandered about the rooms, looked over all the well-remembered places, rode or strolled through the grounds, and found, at every step, inside of the Court, and outside also, something which called up a whole world of associations.

Wandering thus about the Court, from one room to another, it was natural that Zillah should go often to the library, where her father formerly passed the greater part of his time. Here they chiefly staid, and looked over the books and pictures.

One day the conversation turned toward the desk, and Zillah casually remarked that her father used to keep this place so sacred from her intrusion that she had acquired a kind of awe of it, which she had not yet quite overcome. This led Hilda to propose, laughingly, that she should explore it now, on the spot; and, taking the keys, she opened it, and turned over some of the papers. At length she opened a drawer, and drew out a miniature. Zillah snatched it from her, and, looking at it for a few moments, burst into tears.

"It's my mother," she cried, amidst her sobs; "my mother! Oh, my mother!"

Hilda said nothing.

"He showed it to me once, when I was a little child, and I often have wondered, in a vague way, what became of it. I never thought of looking here."

"You may find other things here, also, if you look," said Hilda, gently. "No doubt your papa kept here all his most precious things."

The idea excited Zillah. She covered the portrait with kisses, put it in her pocket, and then sat down to explore the desk.

There were bundles of papers there, lying on the bottom of the desk, all neatly wrapped up and labeled in a most business-like manner. Outside there was a number of drawers, all of which were filled with papers. These were all wrapped in bundles, and were labeled, so as to show at the first glance that they referred to the business of the estate. Some were mortgages, others receipts, others letters, others returned checks and drafts. Nothing among these had any interest for Zillah.

Inside the desk there were some drawers, which Zillah opened. Once on the search, she kept it up most vigorously. The discovery of her mother's miniature led her to suppose that something else of equal value might be found here somewhere. But, after a long search, nothing whatever was found. The search, however, only became the more exciting, and the more she was baffled the more eager did she become to follow it out to the end. While she was investigating in this way, Hilda stood by her, looking on with the air of a sympathizing friend and interested spectator. Sometimes she anticipated Zillah in opening drawers which lay before their eyes, and in seizing and examining the rolls of papers with which each drawer was filled. The search was conducted by both, in fact, but Zillah seemed to take the lead.

"There's nothing more," said Hilda at last, as Zillah opened the last drawer, and found only some old business letters. "You have examined all, you have found nothing. At any rate, the search has given you the miniature; and, besides, it has dispelled that awe that you spoke of."

"But, dear Hilda, there ought to be something," said Zillah. "I hoped for something more. I had an idea that I might find something—I don't know what—something which I could keep for the rest of my life."

"Is not the miniature enough, dearest?" said Hilda, in affectionate tones. "What more could you wish for?"

"I don't know. I prize it most highly; but, still, I feel disappointed."

"There is no more chance," said Hilda.

"No; I have examined every drawer."

"You can not expect any thing more, so let us go away—unless," she added, "you expect to find some mysterious secret drawer somewhere, and I fancy there is hardly any room here for any thing of that kind."

"A secret drawer!" repeated Zillah, with visible excitement. "What an idea! But could there be one? Is there any place for one? I don't see any place. There is the open place where the books are kept, and, on each side, a row of drawers. No; there are no secret drawers here. But see—what is this?"

As Zillah said this she reached out her hand toward the lower part of the place where the books were kept. A narrow piece of wood projected there beyond the level face of the back of the desk. On this piece of wood there was a brass catch, which seemed intended to be fastened; but now, on account of the projection of the

ently. "No doubt your papa
et precious things."
Zillah. She covered the por-
it in her pocket, and then
the desk.
les of papers there, lying on
desk, all neatly wrapped up
most business-like manner.
a number of drawers, all of
ith papers. These were all
and were labeled, so as to
nce that they referred to the
te. Some were mortgages,
ers letters, others returned
Nothing among these had
h.
re were some drawers, which
e on the search, she kept it
The discovery of her mo-
her to suppose that some-
value might be found here
fter a long search, nothing
The search, however, only
iting, and the more she was
r did she become to follow
While she was investigating
ood by her, looking on with
izing friend and interested
es she anticipated Zillah in
h lay before their eyes, and
ning the rolls of papers with
as filled. The search was
a fact, but Zillah seemed to

nore," said Hilda at last, as
st drawer, and found only
tters. "You have exam-
nd nothing. At any rate,
ou the miniature; and, be-
d that awe that you spoke

there ought to be some-
"I hoped for something
a that I might find some-
what—something which I
t of my life."
ure enough, dearest?" said
ones. "What more could

prize it most highly; but,
d."
chance," said Hilda.
ined every drawer."
t any thing more, so let us
e added, "you expect to
secret drawer somewhere,
hardly any room here for
"
repeated Zillah, with visi-
hat an idea! But could
re any place for one? I
There is the open place
kept, and, on each side, a
there are no secret draw-
hat is this?"
he reached out her hand
of the place where the
arrow piece of wood pro-
e level face of the back of
ece of wood there was a
ned intended to be fasten-
t of the projection of the

ece, it was not fastened. Zillah instantly pull-
the wood, and it came out.

It was a shallow drawer, not more than half
inch in depth, and the catch was the means
which it was closed. A bit of brass, that
oked like an ornamental stud, was, in reality,
spring, by pressing which the drawer sprang
en. But when Zillah looked there the drawer
as already open, and, as she pulled it out, she
w it all.

As she pulled it out her hand trembled, and
er heart beat fast. A strange and inexplica-
le feeling filled her mind—a kind of anticipa-
on of calamity—a mysterious foreboding of
vil—which spread a strange terror through her.
ut her excitement was strong, and was not now
be quelled; and it would have needed some-
ing far more powerful than this vague fear to
top her in the search into the mystery of the
esk.

When men do any thing that is destined to
ffect them seriously, for good or evil, it often
appens that at the time of the action a certain
naccountable premonition arises in the mind.
his is chiefly the case when the act is to be the
ause of sorrow. Like the wizard with Lochiel,
ome dark phantom arises before the mind, and
arns of the evil to come. So it was in the pres-
nt case. The pulling out of that drawer was an
ventful moment in the life of Zillah. It was a
risis fraught with future sorrow and evil and
uffering. There was something of all this in
er mind at that moment; and, as she pulled it
ut, and as it lay before her, a shudder passed
hrough her, and she turned her face away.

"Oh, Hilda, Hilda!" she murmured. "I'm
fraid—"

"Afraid of what?" asked Hilda. "What's
he matter? Here is a discovery, certainly. This
ecret drawer could never have been suspected.
What a singular chance it was that you should
ave made such a discovery!"

But Zillah did not seem to hear her. Before
he had done speaking she had turned to ex-
mine the drawer. There were several papers
n it. All were yellow and faded, and the writ-
ng upon them was pale with age. These Zillah
eized in a nervous and tremulous grasp. The
irst one which she unfolded was the secret ci-
pher. Upon this she gazed for some time in
ewilderment, and then opened a paper which
as inclosed within it. This paper, like the oth-
r, was faded, and the ink was pale. It con-
ained what seemed like a key to decipher the
etters on the other. These Zillah placed on
ne side, not choosing to do any more at that
ime. Then she went on to examine the others.
What these were has already been explained.
They were the letters of Obed Chute, and the
arewell note of Lady Chetwynde. But in ad-
ition to these there was another letter, with
which the reader is not as yet acquainted. It
was as brown and as faded as the other papers,
with writing as pale and as illegible. It was in
the handwriting of Obed Chute. It was as fol-
ows:

"New York, *October* 20, 1841.

"Dear Sir,—L. C. has been in the convent
year. The seventy thousand dollars will never
gain trouble you. All is now settled, and no
ne need ever know that the Redfield Lyttoun
ho ran away with L. C. was really Captain
Pomeroy. There is no possibility that any one
can ever find it out, unless you yourself disclose
your secret. Allow me to congratulate you on
the happy termination of this unpleasant business.

"Yours, truly, Obed Chute.

"Captain O. N. Pomeroy."

Zillah read this over many times. She could not comprehend one word of it as yet. Who was L. C. she knew not. The mention of Captain Pomeroy, however, seemed to implicate her father in some "unpleasant business." A darker anticipation of evil, and a profounder dread, settled over her heart. She did not say a word to Hilda. This, whatever it was, could not be made the subject of girlish confidence. It was something which she felt was to be examined by herself in solitude and in fear. Once only did she look at Hilda. It was when the latter asked, in a tone of sympathy:

"Dear Zillah, what is it?" And, as she asked this, she stooped forward and kissed her.

Zillah shuddered involuntarily. Why? Not because she suspected her friend. Her nature was too noble to harbor suspicion. Her shudder rather arose from that mysterious premonition which, according to old superstitions, arises warningly and instinctively and blindly at the approach of danger. So the old superstition says that this involuntary shudder will arise when any one steps over the place which is destined to be our grave. A pleasant fancy!

Zillah shuddered, and looked up at Hilda with a strange dazed expression. It was some time before she spoke.

"They are family papers," she said. "I—I don't understand them. I will look over them."

She gathered up the papers abruptly, and left the room. As the door closed after her Hilda sat looking at the place where she had vanished, with a very singular smile on her face.

For the remainder of that day Zillah continued shut up in her own room. Hilda went once to ask, in a voice of the sweetest and tenderest sympathy, what was the matter. Zillah only replied that she was not well, and was lying down. She would not open her door, however. Again, before bedtime, Hilda went. At her earnest entreaty Zillah let her in. She was very pale, with a weary, anxious expression on her face.

Hilda embraced her and kissed her.

"Oh, my darling," said she, "will you not tell me your trouble? Perhaps I may be of use to you. Will you not give me your confidence?"

"Not just yet, Hilda dearest. I do not want to trouble you. Besides, there may be nothing in it. I will speak to the Earl first, and then I will tell you."

"And you will not tell me now?" murmured Hilda, reproachfully.

"No, dearest, not now. Better not. You will soon know all, whether it is good or bad. I am going back to Chetwynde to-morrow."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes," said Zillah, mournfully. "I must go back to end my suspense. You can do nothing. Lord Chetwynde only can tell me what I want to know. I will tell him all, and he can dispel my trouble, or else deepen it in my heart forever."

"How terrible! What a frightful thing this

must be. My darling, my friend, my sister, tell me this—was it that wretched paper?"

"Yes," said Zillah. "And now, dearest, good-night. Leave me—I am very miserable."

Hilda kissed her again.

"Darling, I would not leave you, but you drive me away. You have no confidence in your poor Hilda. But I will not reproach you. Good-night, darling."

"Good-night, dearest,"

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SHOCK.

THE discovery of these papers thus brought the visit to Pomeroy Court to an abrupt termination. The place had now become intolerable to Zillah. In her impatience she was eager to leave, and her one thought now was to apply to Lord Chetwynde for a solution of this dark mystery.

"Why, Zillah," he cried, as she came back; "what is the meaning of this? You have made but a short stay. Was Pomeroy Court too gloomy, or did you think that your poor father was lonely here without you? Lonely enough he was—and glad indeed he is to see his little Zillah."

And Lord Chetwynde kissed her fondly, exhibiting a delight which touched Zillah to the heart. She could not say any thing then and there about the real cause of her sudden return. She would have to wait for a favorable opportunity, even though her heart was throbbing, in her fierce impatience, as though it would burst. She took refuge in caresses and in general remarks as to her joy on finding herself back again, leaving him to suppose that the gloom which hung around Pomeroy Court now had been too oppressive for her, and that she had hurried away from it.

The subject which was uppermost in Zillah's mind was one which she hardly knew how to introduce. It was of such delicacy that the idea of mentioning it to the Earl filled her with repugnance. For the first day she was distrait and preoccupied. Other days followed. Her nights were sleepless. The Earl soon saw that there was something on her mind, and taxed her with it. Zillah burst into tears and sat weeping.

"My child," said the Earl, tenderly. "This must not go on. There can not be any thing in your thoughts which you need hesitate to tell me. Will you not show some confidence toward me?"

Zillah looked at him, and his loving face encouraged her. Besides, this suspense was unendurable. Her repugnance to mention such a thing for a time made her silent; but at last she ventured upon the dark and terrible subject.

"Something occurred at Pomeroy Court," she said, and then stopped.

"Well?" said the Earl, kindly and encouragingly.

"It is something which I want very much to ask you about—"

"Well, why don't you?" said Lord Chetwynde. "My poor child, you can't be afraid of me, and yet it looks like it. You are very mysterious. This 'something' must have been very important to have sent you back so soon. Was it a discovery, or was it a fright? Did you find a dead body? But what is that you can want to ask me about? I have been a hermit for twenty years. I crept into my shell before you were born, and here I have lived ever since."

The Earl spoke playfully, yet with an uneasy curiosity in his tone. Zillah was encouraged to go on.

"It is something," said she, timidly and hesitatingly, "which I found among my father's papers."

Lord Chetwynde looked all around the room. Then he rose.

"Come into the library," said he. "Perhaps it is something very important; and if so, there need be no listeners."

Saying this he led the way in silence, followed by Zillah. Arriving there he motioned Zillah to a seat, and took a chair opposite hers, looking at her with a glance of perplexity and curiosity. Amidst this there was an air of apprehension about him, as though he feared that the secret which Zillah wished to tell might be connected with those events in his life which he wished to remain unrevealed. This suspicion was natural. His own secret was so huge, so engrossing, that when one came to him as Zillah did now, bowed down by the weight of another secret, he would naturally imagine that it was connected with his own. He sat now opposite Zillah, with this fear in his face, and with the air of a man who was trying to fortify himself against some menacing calamity.

"I have been in very deep trouble," began Zillah, timidly, and with downcast eyes. "This time I ventured into dear papa's study—and I happened to examine his desk."

She hesitated.

"Well?" said the Earl, in a low voice.

"In the desk I found a secret drawer, which I would not have discovered except by the merest chance; and inside of this secret drawer I found some papers, which—which have filled me with anxiety."

"A secret drawer?" said the Earl, as Zillah again paused. "And what were these papers that you found in it?" There was intense anxiety in the tones of his voice as he asked this question.

"I found there," said Zillah, "a paper written in cipher. There was a key connected with it, by means of which I was able to decipher it."

"Written in cipher? How singular!" said the Earl, with increasing anxiety. "What could it possibly have been?"

Zillah stole a glance at him fearfully and inquiringly. She saw that he was much excited and most eager in his curiosity.

"What was it?" repeated the Earl. "Why do you keep me in suspense? You need not be afraid of me, my child. Of course it is nothing that I am in any way concerned with; and even if it were—why—at any rate, tell me what it was."

The Earl spoke in a tone of feverish excitement, which was so unlike any thing that Zillah had ever seen in him before that her embarrassment was increased.

"It was something," she went on, desperately, and in a voice which trembled with agitation, "with which you are connected—something

which I had never heard of before—something which filled me with horror. I will show it to you—but I want first to ask you one thing. Will you answer it?"

"Why should I not?" said the Earl, in a low voice.

"It is about Lady Chetwynde," said Zillah, whose voice had died away to a whisper.

The Earl's face seemed to turn to stone as he looked at her. He had been half prepared for this, but still, when it finally came, it was overwhelming. Once before, and once only in his life, had he told his secret. That was to General Pomeroy. But Zillah was different, and even she, much as he loved her, was not one to whom he could speak about such a thing as this.

"Well?" said he at last, in a harsh, constrained voice. "Ask what you wish."

Zillah started. The tone was so different from that in which Lord Chetwynde usually spoke that she was frightened.

"I—I do not know how to ask what I want to ask," she stammered.

"I can imagine it," said the Earl. "It is about my dishonor. I told General Pomeroy about it once, and it seems that he has kindly written it out for your benefit."

Bitterness indescribable was in the Earl's tones as he said this. Zillah shrank back into herself and looked with fear and wonder upon this man, who a few moments before had been all fondness, but now was all suspicion. Her first impulse was to go and caress him, and explain away the cipher so that it might never again trouble him in this way. But she was too frank and honest to do this, and, besides, her own desire to unravel the mystery had by this time become so intense that it was impossible to stop. The very agitation of the Earl, while it frightened her, still gave new power to her eager and feverish curiosity. But now, more than ever, she began to realize what all this involved. That face which caught her eyes, once all love, which had never before regarded her with aught but tenderness, yet which now seemed cold and icy—that face told her all the task that lay before her. Could she encounter it? But how could she help it? Dare she go on? Yet she could not go back now.

The Earl saw her hesitation.

"I know what you wish to ask," said he, "and will answer it. Child, she dishonored me—she dragged my name down into the dust! Do you ask more? She fled with a villain!"

That stern, white face, which was set in anguish before her, from whose lips these words seemed to be torn, as, one by one, they were flung out to her ears, was remembered by Zillah many and many a time in after years. At this moment the effect upon her was appalling. She was dumb. A vague desire to avert his wrath arose in her heart. She looked at him imploringly; but her look had no longer any power.

"Speak!" he said, impatiently, after waiting for a time. "Speak. Tell me what it is that you have found; tell me what this thing is that concerns me. Can it be any thing more than I have said?"

Zillah trembled. This sudden transformation—this complete change from warm affection to icy coldness—from devoted love to iron sternness—was something which she did not anticipate. Being thus taken unawares, she was all unnerved and overcome. She could no longer restrain herself.

"Oh, father!" she cried, bursting into tears, and flinging herself at his feet in uncontrollable emotion. "Oh, father! Do not look at me so—do not speak so to your poor Zillah. Have I any friend on earth but you?"

She clasped his thin, white hands in hers, while hot tears fell upon them. But the Earl sat unmoved, and changed not a muscle of his countenance. He waited for a time, taking no notice of her anguish, and then spoke, with no relaxation of the sternness of his tone.

"Daughter," said he, "do not become agitated. It was you yourself who brought on this conversation. Let us end it at once. Show me the papers of which you speak. You say that they are connected with me—that they filled you with horror. What is it that you mean? Something more than curiosity about the unhappy woman who was once my wife has driven you to ask explanations of me. Show me the papers."

His tone forbade denial. Zillah said not a word. Slowly she drew from her pocket those papers, heavy with fate, and, with a trembling hand, she gave them to the Earl. Scarcely had she done so than she repented. But it was too late. Beside, of what avail would it have been to have kept them? She herself had begun this conversation; she herself had sought for a revelation of this mystery. The end must come, whatever it might be.

"Oh, father!" she moaned, imploringly.

"What is it?" asked the Earl.

"You knew my dear papa all his life, did you not, from his boyhood?"

"Yes," said the Earl, mechanically, looking at the papers which Zillah had placed in his hand; "yes—from boyhood."

"And you loved and honored him?"

"Yes."

"Was there ever a time in which you lost sight of one another, or did not know all about one another?"

"Certainly. For twenty years we lost sight of one another completely. Why do you ask?"

"Did he ever live in London?" asked Zillah, despairingly.

"Yes," said the Earl; "he lived there for two years, and I scarcely ever saw him. I was in politics; he was in the army. I was busy every moment of my time; he had all that leisure which officers enjoy, and leading the life of gayety peculiar to them. But why do you ask? What connection has all this with the papers?"

Zillah murmured some inaudible words, and then sat watching the Earl as he began to examine the papers, with a face on which there were visible a thousand contending emotions. The Earl looked over the papers. There was the cipher and the key; and there was also a paper written out by Zillah, containing the explanation of the cipher, according to the key. On the paper which contained the key was a written statement to the effect that two-thirds of the letters had no meaning. Trusting to this, Zillah had written out her translation of the cipher, just as Hilda had before done.

The Earl read the translation through most carefully.

"What's this?" he exclaimed, in deeper agita-

tion. Zillah made no reply. In fact, at that moment her heart was throbbing so furiously that she could not have spoken a word. Now had come the crisis of her fate, and her heart, by a certain deep instinct, told her this. Beneath all the agitation arising from the change in the Earl there was something more profound, more dread. It was a continuation of that dark foreboding which she had felt at Pomeroy Court—a certain fearful looking for of some obscure and shadowy calamity.

The Earl, after reading the translation, took the cipher writing and held up the key beside it, while his thin hands trembled, and his eyes seemed to devour the sheet, as he slowly spelled out the frightful meaning. It was bad for Zillah that these papers had fallen into his hands in such a way. Her evil star had been in the ascendant when she was drawn on to this. Coming to him thus, from the hand of Zillah herself, there was an authenticity and an authority about the papers which otherwise might have been wanting. It was to him, at this time, precisely the same as if they had been handed to him by the General himself. Had they been discovered by himself originally, it is possible—in fact, highly probable—that he would have looked upon them with different eyes, and their effect upon him would have been far otherwise. As it was, however, Zillah herself had found them and given them to him. Zillah had been exciting him by her agitation and her suffering, and had, last of all, been rousing him gradually up to a pitch of the most intense excitement, by the conversation which she had brought forward, by her timidity, her reluctance, her strange questionings, and her general agitation. To a task which required the utmost coolness of feeling, and calm impartiality of judgment, he brought a feverish heart, a heated brain, and an unreasoning fear of some terrific disclosure. All this prepared him to accept blindly whatever the paper might reveal.

As he examined the paper he did not look at Zillah, but spelled out the words from the characters, one by one, and saw that the translation was correct. This took a long time; and all the while Zillah sat there, with her eyes fastened on him; but he did not give her one look. All his soul seemed to be absorbed by the papers before him. At last he ended with the cipher writing—or, at least, with as much of it as was supposed to be decipherable—and then he turned to the other papers. These he read through; and then, beginning again, he read them through once more. One only exclamation escaped him. It was while reading that last letter, where mention was made of the name *Redfield Lyttoun* being an assumed one. Then he said, in a low voice which seemed like a groan wrung out by anguish from his inmost soul:

"Oh, my God! my God!"

At last the Earl finished examining the papers. He put them down feebly, and sat staring blankly at vacancy. He looked ten years older than when he had entered the dining-room. His face was as bloodless as the face of a corpse, his lips were ashen, and new furrows seemed to have been traced on his brow. On his face there was stamped a fixed and settled expression of dull, changeless anguish, which smote Zillah to her heart. He did not see her—he did not notice that other face, as pallid as his own, which was turned toward his, with an agony in its expression which rivaled all that he was enduring. No—he noticed nothing, and saw no one. All his soul was taken up now with one thought. He had read the paper, and had at once accepted its terrific meaning. To him it had declared that in the tragedy of his young life, not only his wife had been false, but his friend also. More—that it was his friend who had betrayed his wife. More yet—and there was fresh anguish in this thought—this friend, after the absence of many years, had returned and claimed his friendship, and had received his confidences. To him he had poured out the grief of his heart—the confession of life-long sorrows which had been wrought by the very man to whom he told his tale. And this was the man who, under the plea of ancient friendship, had bought his son for gold! Great Heaven! the son of the woman whom he had ruined—and for gold! He had drawn away his wife to ruin—he had come and drawn away his son—into what? into a marriage with the daughter of his own mother's betrayer.

Such were the thoughts, mad, frenzied, that filled Lord Chetwynde's mind as he sat there stunned—paralyzed by this hideous accumulation of intolerable griefs. What was Zillah to him now? The child of a foul traitor. The one to whom his noble son had been sold. That son had been, as he once said, the solace of his life. For his sake he had been content to live even under his load of shame and misery. For him he had labored; for his happiness he had planned. And for what? What? That which was too hideous to think of—a living death—a union with one from whom he ought to stand apart for evermore.

Little did Zillah know what thoughts were sweeping and surging through the mind of Lord Chetwynde as she sat there watching him with her awful eyes. Little did she dream of the feelings with which, at that moment, he regarded her. Nothing of this kind came to her. One only thought was present—the anguish which he was enduring. The sight of that anguish was intolerable. She looked, and waited, and at last, unable to bear this any longer, she sprang forward, and tore his hands away from his face.

"It's not! It's not!" she gasped. "Say you do not believe it! Oh, father! It's impossible!"

The Earl withdrew his hands, and shrank away from her, regarding her with that blank gaze which shows that the mind sees not the material form toward which the eyes are turned, but is taken up with its own thoughts.

"Impossible?" he repeated. "Yes. That is the word I spoke when I first heard that *she* had left me. Impossible? And why? Is a friend more true than a wife? After Lady Chetwynde failed me, why should I believe in Neville Pomeroy? And you—why did you not let me end my life in peace? Why did you bring to me this frightful—this damning evidence which destroys my faith not in man, but even in Heaven itself?"

"Father! Oh, father!" moaned Zillah.

But the Earl turned away. She seized his hand again in both hers. Again he shrank away, and withdrew his hand from her touch.

She was abhorrent to him then!

toward his, with an agony in
ch rivaled all that he was en-
noticed nothing, and saw no
was taken up now with one
fead the paper, and had at
terrific meaning. To him it
in the tragedy of his young
wife had been false, but his
—that it was his friend who
wife. More yet—and there
in this thought—this friend,
of many years, had returned
endship, and had received his
him he had poured out the
—the confession of life-long
been wrought by the very
old his tale. And this was
r the plea of ancient friend-
s son for gold! Great Heav-
woman whom he had ruined
le had drawn away his wife to
and drawn away his son—
marriage with the daughter
betrayer.
houghts, mad, frenzied, that
nde's mind as he sat there
by this hideous accumula-
griefs. What was Zillah to
ild of a foul traitor. The
ble son had been sold. That
once said, the solace of his
he had been content to live
of shame and misery. For
d; for his happiness he had
what? What? That which
think of—a living death—a
n whose lie ought to stand

know what thoughts were
g through the mind of Lord
at there watching him with
Little did she dream of the
at that moment, as regard-
this kind came to her. One
esent—the anguish which he
e sight of that anguish was
ked, and waited, and at last,
any longer, she sprang for-
ands away from his face.
ot!" she gasped. "Say you
Oh, father! It's impossi-

his hands, and shrank away
her with that blank gaze
he mind sees not the mate-
ich the eyes are turned, but
own thoughts.
repeated. "Yes. That is
n I first heard that *she* had
? And why? Is a friend
e? After Lady Chetwynde
I believe in Neville Pome-
y did you not let me end
Why did you bring to me
amning evidence which de-
a man, but even in Heaven

ther!" moaned Zillah.
ed away. She seized his
hers. Again he shrank
his hand from her touch.
to him then!

"HE SAT STARING BLANKLY AT VACANCY."

This was her thought. She stepped back, and at once a wild revulsion of feeling took place within her also. All the fierce pride of her hot, impassioned Southern nature rose up in rebellion against this sudden, this hasty change. Why should he so soon lose faith in her father? He guilty!—her father!—the noble—the gentle—the stainless—the true—he! the pure in heart—the one who through all her life had stood before her as the ideal of manly honor and loyalty and truth? Never! If it came to a question between Lord Chetwynde and that idol of her young life, whose memory she adored, then Lord Chetwynde must go down. Who was he that dared to think evil for one moment of the noblest of men! Could he himself compare with

the father whom she had lost, in all that is highest in manhood? No. The charge was foul and false. Lord Chetwynde was false for so doubting his friend.

All this flashed over Zillah's mind, and at that moment, in her revulsion of indignant pride, she forgot altogether all those doubts which, but a short time before, had been agitating her own soul—doubts, too, which were so strong that they had forced her to bring on this scene with the Earl. All this was forgotten. Her loyalty to her father triumphed over doubt, so soon as she saw another sharing that doubt.

But her thoughts were suddenly checked.

The Earl, who had but lately shrunk away from her, now turned toward her, and looked at her with a strange, dazed, blank expression of face, and wild vacant eyes. For a moment he sat turned toward her thus; and then, giving a deep groan, he fell forward out of his chair on the floor. With a piercing cry Zillah sprang toward him and tried to raise him up. Her cry aroused the household. Mrs. Hart was first among those who rushed to the room to help her. She flung her arms around the prostrate form, and lifted it upon the sofa. As he lay there a shudder passed through Zillah's frame at the sight which she beheld. For the Earl, in falling, had struck his head against the sharp corner of the table, and his white and venerable hairs were now all stained with blood, which trickled slowly over his wan pale face.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW PERPLEXITY.

At the sight of that venerable face, as white as marble, now set in the fixedness of death, whose white hair was all stained with the blood that oozed from the wound on his forehead, all Zillah's tenderness returned. Bitterly she reproached herself.

"I have killed him! It was all my fault!" she cried. "Oh, save him! Do something! Can you not save him?"

Mrs. Hart did not seem to hear her at all. She had carried the Earl to the sofa, and then she knelt by his side, with her arms flung around him. She seemed unconscious of the presence of Zillah. Her head lay on the Earl's breast. At last she pressed her lips to his forehead, where the blood flowed, with a quick, feverish kiss. Her white face, as it was set against the stony face of the Earl, startled Zillah. She stood mute.

The servants hurried in. Mrs. Hart roused herself, and had the Earl carried to his room. Zillah followed. The Earl was put to bed. A servant was sent off for a doctor. Mrs. Hart and Zillah watched anxiously till the doctor came. The doctor dressed the wound, and gave directions for the treatment of the patient. Quiet above all things was enjoined. Apoplexy was hinted at, but it was only a hint. The real conviction of the doctor seemed to be that it was mental trouble of some kind, and this conviction was shared by those who watched the Earl.

Zillah and Mrs. Hart both watched that night. They sat in an adjoining room. But little was said at first. Zillah was busied with her own thoughts, and Mrs. Hart was preoccupied, and more distrait than usual.

Midnight came. For hours Zillah had brooded over her own sorrows. She longed for sympathy. Mrs. Hart seemed to her to be the one in whom she might best confide. The evident affection which Mrs. Hart felt for the Earl was of itself an inducement to confidence. Her own affection for the aged housekeeper also impelled her to tell her all that had happened. And so it was that, while they sat there together, Zillah gradually told her about her interview with the Earl.

But the story which Zillah told did not comprise the whole truth. She did not wish to go into details, and there were many circumstances which she did not feel inclined to tell to the housekeeper. There was no reason why she should tell about the secret cipher, and very many reasons why she should not. It was an affair which concerned her father and her family. That her own fears were well founded she dared not suppose, and therefore she would not even hint about such fears to another. Above all, she was unwilling to tell what effect the disclosure of that secret of hers had upon the Earl. Better far, it seemed to her, it would be to carry that secret to the grave than to disclose it in any confidence to any third person. Whatever the result might be, it would be better to hold it concealed between the Earl and herself.

What Zillah said was to the effect that she had been asking the Earl about Lady Chetwynde; that the mention of the subject had produced an extraordinary effect; that she wished to withdraw it, but the Earl insisted on knowing what she had to say.

"Oh," she cried, "how bitterly I lament that I said any thing about it! But I had seen something at home which excited my curiosity. It was about Lady Chetwynde. It stated that she eloped with a certain Redfield Lyttoun, and that the name was an assumed one; but what," cried Zillah, suddenly starting forward—"what is the matter?"

While Zillah was speaking Mrs. Hart's face—always pale—seemed to turn gray, and a shudder passed through her thin, emaciated frame. She pressed her hand on her heart, and suddenly sank back with a groan.

Zillah sprang toward her and raised her up. Mrs. Hart still kept her hand on her heart, and gave utterance to low moans of anguish. Zillah chafed her hands, and then hurried off and got some wine. At the taste of the stimulating liquor the poor creature revived. She then sat panting, with her eyes fixed on the floor. Zillah sat looking at her without saying a word, and afraid to touch again upon a subject which had produced so disastrous an effect. Yet why should it? Why should this woman show emotion equal to that of the Earl at the very mention of such a thing? There was surely some unfathomable mystery about it. The emotion of the Earl was intelligible—that of Mrs. Hart was not so. Such were the thoughts that passed through her mind as she sat there in silence watching her companion.

Hours passed without one word being spoken. Zillah frequently urged Mrs. Hart to go to bed, but Mrs. Hart refused. She could not sleep, she said, and she would rather be near the Earl

At length Zillah, penetrated with pity for the poor suffering woman, insisted on her lying down on the sofa. Mrs. Hart had to yield. She lay down accordingly, but not to sleep. The sighs that escaped her from time to time showed that her secret sorrow kept her awake.

Suddenly, out of a deep silence, Mrs. Hart sprang up and turned her white face toward Zillah. Her large, weird eyes seemed to burn themselves into Zillah's brain. Her lips moved. It was but in a whisper that she spoke:

"Never—never—never—mention it again—either to him or to me. It is hell to both of us!"

She fell back again, moaning.

Zillah sat transfixed, awe-struck and wondering.

CHAPTER XX.

A MODEL NURSE, AND FRIEND IN NEED.

ZILLAH did not tell Hilda about the particular cause of the Earl's sickness for some time, but Hilda was sufficiently acute to conjecture what it might be. She was too wary to press matters, and although she longed to know all, yet she refrained from asking. She knew enough of Zillah's frank and confiding nature to feel sure that the confidence would come of itself some day unasked. Zillah was one of those who can not keep a secret. Warm-hearted, open, and impulsive, she was ever on the watch for sympathy, and no sooner did she have a secret than she longed to share it with some one. She had divulged her secret to the Earl, with results that were lamentable. She had partially disclosed it to Mrs. Hart, with results equally lamentable. The sickness of the Earl and of Mrs. Hart was now added to her troubles; and the time would soon come when, from the necessities of her nature, she would be compelled to pour out her soul to Hilda. So Hilda waited.

Mrs. Hart seemed to be completely broken down. She made a feeble attempt to take part in nursing the Earl, but fainted away in his room. Hilda was obliged to tell her that she would be of more use by staying away altogether, and Mrs. Hart had to obey. She tottered about, frequently haunting that portion of the house where the Earl lay, and asking questions about his health. Zillah and Hilda were the chief nurses, and took turns at watching. But Zillah was inexperienced, and rather noisy. In spite of her affectionate solicitude she could not create new qualities within herself, and in one moment make herself a good nurse. Hilda, on the contrary, seemed formed by nature for the sick-room. Stealthy, quiet, noiseless, she moved about as silently as a spirit. Every thing was in its place. The medicines were always arranged in the best order. The pillows were always comfortable. The doctor looked at her out of his professional eyes with cordial approval, and when he visited he gave his directions always to her, as though she alone could be considered a responsible being. Zillah saw this, but felt no jealousy. She humbly acquiesced in the doctor's decision; meekly felt that she had none of the qualities of a nurse; and admired Hilda's genius for that office with all her heart. Added to this conviction of her own inability, there was the consciousness that she had brought all this upon the Earl—a consciousness which brought on self-reproach and perpetual remorse. The very affection which she felt for Lord Chetwynde of itself incapacitated her. A good nurse should be cool. Like a good doctor or a good surgeon, his affections should not be too largely interested. It is a mistake to suppose that one's dear friends make one's best nurses. They are very well to look at, but not to administer medicine or smooth the pillow. Zillah's face of agony was not so conducive to recovery as the calm smile of Hilda. The Earl did not need kisses or hot tears upon his face. What he did need was quiet, and a regular administration of medicines presented by a cool, steady hand.

The Earl was very low. He was weak, yet conscious of all that was going on. Zillah's heart was gladdened to hear once more words of love from him. The temporary hardness of heart which had appalled her had all passed away, and the old affection had returned. In a few feeble words he begged her not to let Guy know that he was sick, for he would soon recover, and it would only worry his son. Most of the words which he spoke were about that son. Zillah would have given any thing if she could have brought Guy to that bedside. But that was impossible, and she could only wait and hope.

Weeks passed away, and in the interviews which she had with Hilda Zillah gradually let her know all that had happened. She told her about the discovery of the papers, and the effect which they had upon the Earl. At last, one evening, she gave the papers to Hilda. It was when Zillah came to sit up with the Earl. Hilda took the papers solemnly, and said that she would look over them. She reproached Zillah for not giving her her confidence before, and said that she had a claim before any one, and

if she had only told her all about it at Pomeroy Court, this might not have happened. All this Zillah felt keenly, and began to think that the grand mistake which she had made was in not taking Hilda into her confidence at the very outset.

"I do not know what these papers may mean," said Hilda; "but I tell you candidly that if they contain what I suspect, I would have advised you never to mention it to Lord Chetwynde. It was an awful thing to bring it all up to him."

"Then you know all about it?" asked Zillah, wonderingly.

"Of course. Every body knows the sorrow of his life. It has been public for the last twenty years. I heard all about it when I was a little girl from one of the servants. I could have advised you to good purpose, and saved you from sorrow, if you had only confided in me."

Such were Hilda's words, and Zillah felt new self-reproach to think that she had not confided in her friend.

"I hope another time you will not be so wanting in confidence," said Hilda, as she retired. "Do I not deserve it?"

"You do, you do, my dearest!" said Zillah, affectionately. "I have always said that you were like a sister—and after this I will tell you every thing."

Hilda kissed her, and departed.

Zillah waited impatiently to see Hilda again. She was anxious to know what effect these papers would produce on her. Would she scout them as absurd, or believe the statement? When Hilda appeared again to relieve her, all Zillah's curiosity was expressed in her face. But Hilda said nothing about the papers. She urged Zillah to go and sleep.

"I know what you want to say," said she, "but I will not talk about it now. Go off to bed, darling, and get some rest. You need it."

So Zillah had to go, and defer the conversation till some other time. She went away to bed, and slept but little. Before her hour she was up and hastened back.

"Why, Zillah," said Hilda, "you are half an hour before your time. You are wearing yourself out."

"Did you read the papers?" asked Zillah, as she kissed her.

"Yes," said Hilda, seriously.

"And what do you think?" asked Zillah, with a frightened face.

"My darling," said Hilda, "how excited you are! How you tremble! Poor dear! What is the matter?"

"That awful confession!" gasped Zillah, in a scarce audible voice.

"My darling," said Hilda, passing her arm about Zillah's neck, "why should you take it so to heart? You have no concern with it. You are Guy Molyneux's wife. This paper has now no concern with you."

Zillah started back as though she had been stung. Nothing could have been more abhorrent to her, in such a connection, than the suggestion of her marriage.

"You believe it, then?"

"Believe it! Why, don't you?" said Hilda, in wondering tones. "You *do*, or you would not feel so. Why did you ask the Earl? Why did you give it to me? Is it not your father's own confession?"

Zillah shuddered, and burst into tears.

"No," she cried at last; "I do not believe it. I will never believe it. Why did I ask the Earl? Because I believed that he would dispel my anxiety. That is all."

"Ah, poor child!" said Hilda, fondly. "You are too young to have trouble. Think no more of this."

"Think of it! I tell you I think of it all the time—night and day," cried Zillah, impetuously. "Think of it! Why, what else can I do than think of it?"

"But you do not believe it?"

"No. Never will I believe it."

"Then why trouble yourself about it?"

"Because it is a stain on my dear papa's memory. It is undeserved—it is inexplicable; but it is a stain. And how can I, his daughter, not think of it?"

"A stain!" said Hilda, after a thoughtful pause. "If there were a stain on such a name, I can well imagine that you would feel anguish. But there is none. How can there be? Think of his noble life spent in honor in the service of his country! Can you associate any stain with such a life?"

"He was the noblest of men!" interrupted Zillah, vehemently.

"Then do not talk of a stain," said Hilda, calmly. "As to Lord Chetwynde, he, at least, has nothing to say. To him General Pomeroy was such a friend as he could never have hoped for. He saved Lord Chetwynde from beggary and ruin. When General Pomeroy first came back to England he found Lord Chetwynde at the last extremity, and advanced sixty thousand pounds to help him. Think of that! And it's true. I was informed of it on good authority. Besides, General Pomeroy did more; for he intrusted his only daughter to Lord Chetwynde—"

"My God!" cried Zillah; "what are you saying? Do you not know, Hilda, that every word that you speak is a stab? What do you mean? Do you dare to talk as if my papa has shut the mouth of an injured friend by a payment of money? Do you mean me to think that, after dishonoring his friend, he has sought to efface the dishonor by gold? My God! you will drive me mad. You make my papa, and Lord Chetwynde also, sink down into fathomless depths of infamy."

"You torture my words into a meaning different from what I intended," said Hilda, quietly. "I merely meant to show you that Lord Chetwynde's obligations to General Pomeroy were so vast that he ought not even to suspect him, no matter how strong the proof."

Zillah waved her hands with a gesture of despair.

"No matter how strong the proof!" she repeated. "Ah! There it is again. You quietly assume my papa's guilt in every word. You have read those papers, and have believed every word."

"You are very unkind, Zillah. I was doing my best to comfort you."

"Comfort!" cried Zillah, in indescribable tones.

"Ah, my darling, do not be cross," said Hilda, twining her arms around Zillah's neck. "You

know I loved your papa only less than you did. He was a father to me. What can I say? You yourself were troubled by those papers. So was I. And that is all I will say. I will not speak of them again."

And here Hilda stopped, and went about the room to attend to her duties as nurse. Zillah stood, with her mind full of strange, conflicting feelings. The hints which Hilda had given sank deep into her soul. What did they mean? Their frightful meaning stood revealed full before her in all its abhorrent reality.

Reviewing those papers by the light of Hilda's dark interpretation, she saw what they involved. This, then, was the cause of her marriage. Her father had tried to atone for the past. He had made Lord Chetwynde rich to pay for the dishonor that he had suffered. He had stolen away the wife, and given a daughter in her place. She, then, had been the medium of this frightful attempt at readjustment, this atonement for wrongs that could never be atoned for. Hilda's meaning made this the only conceivable cause for that premature engagement, that hurried marriage by the death-bed. And could there be any other reason? Did it not look like the act of a remorseful sinner, anxious to finish his expiation, and make amends for crime before meeting his Judge in the other world to which he was hastening? The General had offered up every thing to expiate his crime—he had given his fortune—he had sacrificed his daughter. What other cause could possibly have moved him to enforce the hideous mockery of that ghastly, that unparalleled marriage?

Beneath such intolerable thoughts as these, Zillah's brain whirled. She could not avoid them. Affection, loyalty, honor—all bade her trust in her father; the remembrance of his noble character, of his stainless life, his pure and gentle nature, all recurred. In vain. Still the dark suspicion insidiously conveyed by Hilda would obtrude; and, indeed, under such circumstances, Zillah would have been more than human if they had not come forth before her. As it was, she was only human and young and inexperienced. Dark days and bitter nights were before her, but among all none were more dark and bitter than this.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DARK COMMISSION.

These amateur nurses who had gathered about the Earl differed very much, as may be supposed, in their individual capacities. As for Mrs. Hart, she was very quickly put out of the way. The stroke which had prostrated her, at the outset, did not seem to be one from which she could very readily recover. The only thing which she did was to totter to the room early in the morning, so as to find out how the Earl was, and then to totter back again until the next morning. Mrs. Hart thus was incapable; and Zillah was not very much better. Since her conversation with Hilda there were thoughts in her mind so new, so different from any which she had ever had before, and so frightful in their import, that they changed all her nature. She became melancholy, self-absorbed, and preoccupied. Silent and distrait, she wandered about the Earl's room aimlessly, and did not seem able to give to him that close and undivided attention which he needed. Hilda found it necessary to reproach her several times in her usual affectionate way; and Zillah tried, after each reproach, to rouse herself from her melancholy, so as to do better the next time. Yet, the next time she did just as badly; and, on the whole, acquitted herself but poorly of her responsible task.

And thus it happened that Hilda was obliged to assume the supreme responsibility. The others had grown more than ever useless, and she, accordingly, grew more than ever necessary. To this task she devoted herself with that assiduity and patience for which she was distinguished. The constant loss of sleep, and the incessant and weary vigils which she was forced to maintain, seemed to have but little effect upon her elastic and energetic nature. Zillah, in spite of her preoccupation, could not help seeing that Hilda was doing nearly all the work, and remonstrated with her accordingly. But to her earnest remonstrances Hilda turned a deaf ear.

"You see, dear," said she, "there is no one but me. Mrs. Hart is herself in need of a nurse, and you are no better than a baby, so how can I help watching poor dear Lord Chetwynde?"

"But you will wear yourself out," persisted Zillah.

"Oh, we will wait till I begin to show signs of weariness," said Hilda, in a sprightly tone. "At present, I feel able to spend a great many days and nights here."

Indeed, to all her remonstrances Hilda was quite inaccessible, and it remained for Zillah to see her friend spend most of her time in that sick-room, the ruling spirit, while she was comparatively useless. She could only feel gratitude for so much kindness, and express that gratitude whenever any occasion arose. While Hilda was regardless of Zillah's remonstrances, she was equally so of the doctor's warnings. That functionary did not wish to see his best nurse wear herself out, and warned her frequently, but with no effect whatever. Hilda's self-sacrificing zeal was irrepressible and invincible.

While Hilda was thus devoting herself to the Earl with such tireless patience, and exciting the wonder and gratitude of all in that little household by her admirable self-devotion, there was another who watched the progress of events with perfect calmness, yet with deep anxiety. Gualtier was not able now to give his music lessons, yet, although he no longer could gain admission to the inmates of Castle Chetwynde, his anxiety about the Earl was a sufficient excuse for calling every day to inquire about his health. On those inquiries he not only heard about the Earl, but also about all the others, and more particularly about Hilda. He cultivated an acquaintance with the doctor, who, though generally disposed to stand on his dignity toward musicians, seemed to think that Gualtier had gained from the Earl's patronage a higher title to be noticed than any which his art could give. Besides, the good doctor knew that Gualtier was constantly at the Castle, and naturally wished to avail himself of so good an opportunity of finding out all about the internal life of this noble but secluded family. Gualtier humored him to the fullest extent, and with a

great appearance of frankness told him as much as he thought proper, and no more; in return for which confidence he received the fullest information as to the present condition of the household. What surprised Gualtier most was Hilda's devotion. He had not anticipated it. It was real, yet what could be her motive? In his own language—What game was the little thing up to? This was the question which he incessantly asked himself, without being able to answer it. His respect for her genius was too great to allow him for one moment to suppose that it was possible for her to act without some deep motive. Her immolation of self, her assiduity, her tenderness, her skill, all seemed to this man so many elements in the game which she was playing. And for all these things he only admired her the more fervently. That she would succeed he never for a moment doubted; though what it was that she might be aiming at, and what it was that her success might involve, were inscrutable mysteries.

What game is the little thing up to? he asked himself, affectionately, and with tender emphasis. What game? And this became the one idea of his mind. Little else were his thoughts engaged in, except an attempt to fathom the depths of Hilda's design. But he was baffled. What that design involved could hardly have been discovered by him. Often and often he wished that he could look into that sick-chamber to see what the "little thing was up to." Yet, could he have looked into that chamber, he would have seen nothing that could have enlightened him. He would have seen a slender, graceful form, moving lightly about the room, now stooping over the form of the sick man to adjust or to smooth his pillow, now watchfully and warily administering the medicine which stood near the bed. Hilda was not one who would leave any thing to be discovered, even by those who might choose to lurk in ambush and spy at her through a keyhole.

But though Hilda's plans were for some time impenetrable, there came at last an opportunity when he was furnished with light sufficient to reveal them—a lurid light which made known to him possibilities in her which he had certainly not suspected before.

One day, on visiting Chetwynde Castle, he found her in the chief parlor. He thought that she had come there purposely in order to see him; and he was not disappointed. After a few questions as to the Earl's health, she excused herself, and said that she must hurry back to his room; but, as she turned to go, she slipped a piece of paper into his hand, as she had done once before. On it he saw the following words:

"*Be in the West Avenue, at the former place, at three o'clock.*"

Gualtier wandered about in a state of feverish impatience till the appointed hour, marveling what the purpose might be which had induced Hilda to seek the interview. He felt that the purpose must be of far-reaching importance which would lead her to seek him at such a time; but what it was he tried in vain to conjecture.

At last the hour came, and Gualtier, who had been waiting so long, was rewarded by the sight of Hilda. She was as calm as usual, but greeted him with greater cordiality than she was in the habit of showing. She also evinced greater caution than even on the former occasion, and led the way to a more lonely spot, and looked all around most carefully, so as to guard against the possibility of discovery. When, at length, she spoke, it was in a low and guarded voice.

"I am so worn down by nursing," she said, "that I have had to come out for a little fresh air. But I would not leave the Earl till they absolutely forced me. Such is my devotion to him that there is an impression abroad through the Castle that I will not survive him."

"Survive him? You speak as though he were doomed," said Gualtier.

"He—is—very—low," said Hilda, in a solemn monotone.

Gualtier said nothing, but regarded her in silence for some time.

"What was the cause of his illness?" he asked at length. "The doctor thinks that his mind is affected."

"For once, something like the truth has penetrated that heavy brain."

"Do you know any thing that can have happened?" asked Gualtier, cautiously.

"Yes; a sudden shock. Strange to say, it was administered by Mrs. Molyneux."

"Mrs. Molyneux!"

"Yes."

"I am so completely out of your sphere that I know nothing whatever of what is going on. How Mrs. Molyneux can have given a shock to the Earl that could have reduced him to his present state, I can not imagine."

"Of course it was not intentional. She happened to ask the Earl about something which revived old memories and old sorrows in a very forcible manner. He grew excited—so much so, indeed, that he fainted, and, in falling, struck his head. That is the whole story."

"May I ask," said Gualtier, after a thoughtful pause, "if Mrs. Molyneux's ill-fated questions had any reference to those things about which we have spoken together, from time to time?"

"They had—and a very close one. In fact, they arose out of those very papers which we have had before us."

Gualtier looked at Hilda, as she said this, with the closest attention.

"It happened," said Hilda, "that Mrs. Molyneux, on her last visit to Pomeroy Court, was seized with a fancy to examine her father's desk. While doing so, she found a secret drawer, which, by some singular accident, had been left started, and a little loose—just enough to attract her attention. This she opened, and in it, strange to say, she found that very cipher which I have told you of. A key accompanied it, by which she was able to read as much as we have read; and there were also those letters with which you are familiar. She took them to her room, shut herself up, and studied them as eagerly as ever either you or I did. She then hurried back to Chetwynde Castle, and laid every thing before the Earl. Out of this arose his excitement and its very sad results."

"I did not know that there were sufficient materials for accomplishing so much," said Gualtier, cautiously.

"No; the materials were not abundant. There was the cipher, with which no one would have supposed that any thing could be done. Then there were those other letters which lay with it

in the desk, which corroborated what the cipher seemed to say. Out of this has suddenly arisen ruin and anguish."

"There was also the key," said Gualtier, in a tone of delicate insinuation.

"True," said Hilda; "had the key not been inclosed with the papers, she could not have understood the cipher, or made any thing out of the letters."

"The Earl must have believed it all."

"He never doubted for an instant. By the merest chance, I happened to be in a place where I saw it all," said Hilda, with a peculiar emphasis. "I thought that he would reject it at first, and that the first impulse would be to scout such a charge. But mark this"—and her voice grew solemn—"there must have been some knowledge in his mind of things unknown to us, or else he could never have been so utterly and completely overwhelmed. It was a blow which literally crushed him—in mind and body."

There was a long silence.

"And you think he can not survive this?" asked Gualtier.

"No," said Hilda, in a very strange, slow voice, "I do not think—that—he—can—recover. He is old and feeble. The shock was great. His mind wanders, also. He is sinking slowly, but surely."

She paused, and looked earnestly at Gualtier, who returned her look with one of equal earnestness.

"I have yet to tell you what purpose induced me to appoint this meeting," said she, in so strange a voice that Gualtier started. But he said not a word.

Hilda, who was standing near to him, drew nearer still. She looked all around, with a strange light in her eyes. Then she turned to him again, and said, in a low whisper:

"I want you to get me something."

Gualtier looked at her inquiringly, but in silence. His eyes seemed to ask her, "What is it?"

She put her mouth close to his ear, and whispered something, heard only by him. But that low whisper was never forgotten. His face turned deathly pale. He looked away, and said not a word.

"Good-by," said Hilda; "I am going now." She held out her hand. He grasped it. At that moment their eyes met, and a look of intelligence flashed between them.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE JUDAS KISS.

It has already been said that when the Earl rallied a little so as to recognize Zillah, all his old affection was exhibited, and the temporary aversion which he had manifested during that eventful time when he had seen the cipher writing had passed off without leaving any trace of its existence. It is quite likely indeed that the whole circumstance had been utterly obliterated from his memory, and when his eyes caught sight of Zillah she was to him simply the one whom he loved next best to Guy. His brain was in such a state that his faculties seemed dulled, and his memory nearly gone. Had he remembered that scene he would either have continued to regard Zillah with horror, or else, if affection had triumphed over a sense of injury, he would have done something or said something in his more lucid intervals to assure Zillah of his continued love. But nothing of the kind occurred. He clung to Zillah like a child, and the few faint words which he addressed to her simply recognized her as the object of an affection which had never met with an interruption. They also had reference to Guy, as to whether she had written to him yet, and whether any more letters had been received from him. A letter, which came during the illness, she tried to read, but the poor weary brain of the sick man could not follow her. She had to tell him in a few general terms its contents.

For some weeks she had hoped that the Earl would recover, and therefore delayed sending the sad news to Guy. But at length she could no longer conceal from herself the fact that the illness would be long, and she saw that it was too serious to allow Guy to remain in ignorance. She longed to address him words of condolence, and sympathized deeply with him in the anxiety which she knew would be felt by a heart so affectionate as his.

And now as she thought of writing to him there came to her, more bitterly than ever, the thought of her false position. She write! She could not. It was Hilda who would write. Hilda stood between her and the one whom she wished to soothe. In spite of her warm and sisterly affection for her friend, and her boundless trust in her, this thought now sent a thrill of vexation through her; and she bitterly lamented the chain of events by which she had been placed in such a position. It was humiliating and galling. But could she not yet escape? Might she not even now write in her own name explaining all? No. It could not be—not now, for what would be the reception of such explanations, coming as they would with the news of his father's illness! Would he treat them with any consideration whatever? Would not his anxiety about his father lead him to regard them with an impatient disdain? But perhaps, on the other hand, he might feel softened and accept her explanation readily, without giving any thought to the strange deceit which had been practiced for so long a time. This gave her a gleam of hope; but in her perplexity she could not decide, so she sought counsel from Hilda as usual. And Mrs. Hart being in the possession of her usual faculties she might possibly have asked her advice also; but, as it was, Hilda was the only one to whom she could turn.

Hilda listened to her with that sweet smile, and that loving and patient consideration, which she always gave to Zillah's confidences and appeals.

"Darling," said she, after a long and thoughtful silence, "I understand fully the perplexity which you feel. In fact, this letter *ought* to come from you, and from you only. I'm extremely sorry that I ever began this. I'm sure I did it from the *very best* motives. Who could ever have dreamed that it would become so embarrassing? And now I don't know what to do—that is, not just now."

"Do you think he would be angry at the deceit?"

"Do you yourself think so?" asked Hilda in reply.

HILDA WRITES TO GUY MOLYNEUX.

"Why, that is what I am afraid of; but then isn't it possible that he might be softened, you know—by anxiety?"

"People don't get softened by anxiety. They get impatient, angry with the world and with Providence. But the best way to judge is to put yourself in his situation. Suppose you were in India, and a letter was written to you by your wife—or your husband, I suppose I should say—telling you that your father was extremely ill, and that he himself had been deceiving you for some years. The writing would be strange—quite unfamiliar; the story would be almost incredible; you wouldn't know what to think. You'd be deeply anxious, and yet half believe that some one was practicing a cruel jest on you. For my part, if I had an explanation to make I would wait for a time of prosperity and happiness. Misfortune makes people so bitter."

"That is the very thing that I'm afraid of," said Zillah, despairingly. "And—oh dear, what *shall* I do?"

"You must do one thing certainly, and that is write him about his father. You yourself must do it, darling."

"Why, what do you mean? You were just now showing me that this was the very thing which I could not do."

"You misunderstand me," said Hilda, with a smile. "Why, do you really mean to say that you do not see how easy it is to get out of this difficulty?"

"Easy! It seems to me a terrible one."

"Why, my darling child, don't you see that after you write your letter I can *copy* it? You surely have nothing so very private to say that you will object to that. I suppose all that you want to do is to break the news to him as gently and tenderly as possible. You don't want to indulge in expressions of personal affection, of course."

"Oh, my dearest Hilda!" cried Zillah, overjoyed. "What an owl I am not to have thought of that! It meets the whole difficulty. I write—you copy it—and it will be *my* letter after all. How I could have been so stupid I do not see. But I'm always so. As to any private confidences, there is no danger of any thing of that kind taking place between people who are so very peculiarly situated as we are."

"I suppose not," said Hilda, with a smile.

"But it's such a bore to copy letters."

"My darling, can any thing be a trouble that I do for you? Besides, you know how very fast I write."

"You are always so kind," said Zillah, as she kissed her friend fondly and tenderly. "I wish I could do something for you; but—poor me!—I don't seem able to do any thing for any body—not even for the dear old Earl. What wouldn't I give to be like you!"

"You are far better as you are, darling," said Hilda, with perhaps a double meaning in her words. "But now you must write the letter, and bring it to me, and I will copy it as fast as I can, and send it by the post."

Under these circumstances that letter was written.

The Earl lingered on the dangerous stage, with scarcely any symptoms of improvement. At first, indeed, there was a change when he had seemed better, but that passed away. The relapse sorely puzzled the doctors. If he had not been in such good hands he might have suspected the nurse of neglect, but that was the last thing that he could have thought of Hilda. Indeed, Hilda had been so fearful of the Earl's being neg-

[illegible] that she had, for his sake, assumed these [illegible]ding cares. Singularly enough, how[illegible] was since her assumption of the chief [illegible] of nursing him that the Earl had relapsed. The doctor felt that nothing better in the way of nursing him could be conceived of. Zillah thought that if it had not been for Hilda the Earl would scarcely have been alive. As for Hilda herself, she could only meekly deprecate the doctor's praises, and sigh to think that such care as hers should prove so unavailing.

The Earl's case was, indeed, a mysterious one. After making every allowance for the shock which he might have experienced, and after laying all possible stress upon that blow on his head which he had suffered when falling forward, it still was a subject of wonder to the doctor why he should not recover. Hilda had told him in general terms, and with her usual delicacy, of the cause of the Earl's illness, so that the doctor knew that it arose from mental trouble, and not from physical ailment. Yet, even under these circumstances, he was puzzled at the complete prostration of the Earl, and at the adverse symptoms which appeared as time passed on.

The Earl slept most of the time. He was in a kind of stupor. This puzzled the doctor extremely. The remedies which he administered seemed not to have their legitimate effect. In fact they seemed to have no effect, and the most powerful drugs proved useless in this mysterious case.

"It must be the mind," said the doctor to himself, as he rode home one day after finding the Earl in a lower state than usual. "It must be the mind; and may the devil take the mind, for hang me if I can ever make head or tail of it!"

Yet on the night when the doctor soliloquized in this fashion a change had come over the Earl which might have been supposed to be for the better. He was exceedingly weak, so weak, indeed, that it was only with a great effort that he could move his hand; but he seemed to be more sensible than usual. That "mind" which the doctor cursed seemed to have resumed something of its former functions. He asked various questions; and, among others, he wished to hear Guy's last letter. This Hilda promised he should hear on the morrow. Zillah was there at the time, and the Earl cast an appealing glance toward her; but such was her confidence in Hilda that she did not dream of doing any thing to oppose her decision. So she shook her head, and bending over the Earl, she kissed him, and said, "To-morrow."

The Earl, by a great effort, reached up his thin, feeble hand and took hers.

"You will not leave me?" he murmured.

"Certainly not, if you want me to stay," said Zillah.

The Earl, by a still greater effort, dragged her down nearer to him.

"Don't leave me with *her*," he whispered.

Zillah started at the tone of his voice. It was a tone of fear.

"What is it that he says?" asked Hilda, in a sweet voice.

The Earl frowned. Zillah did not see it, however. She looked back to Hilda and answered, "He wants me to stay with him."

"Poor dear!" said Hilda. "Well, let him have what you will. It is a whim. He loves you now. Tell him that you'll stay."

And Zillah stooped down and told the Earl that she would stay.

There was trouble in the Earl's face. He lay silent and motionless, with his eyes fixed upon Zillah. Something there was in his eyes which expressed such mute appeal that Zillah wondered what it might be. She went over to him and sat by his side. He feebly reached out his thin hand. Zillah took it and held it in both of hers, kissing him as she did so.

"You will not leave me?" he whispered.

"No, dear father."

A faint pressure of her hand was the Earl's response, and a faint smile of pleasure hovered over his thin lips.

"Have you written to Guy?" he asked again.

"Yes. I have written for him to come home," said Zillah, who meant that Hilda had written in her name; but, in her mind, it was all the same.

The Earl drew a deep sigh. There was trouble in his face. Zillah marked it, but supposed that he was anxious about that son who was never absent from his thoughts. She did not attempt to soothe his mind in any way. He was not able to keep up a conversation. Nor did she notice that the pressure on her hand was stronger whenever Hilda, with her light, stealthy step, came near; nor did she see the fear that was in his face as his eyes rested upon her.

The Earl drew Zillah faintly toward him. She bent down over him.

"Send her away," said he, in a low whisper.

"Who? Hilda?" asked Zillah, in wonder.

"Yes. *You* nurse me—*you* stay with me."

Zillah at once arose. "Hilda," said she, "he wants me to stay with him to-night. I suppose he thinks I give up too much to you, and neglect him. Oh dear, I only wish I was such a nurse as you! But, since he wishes it, I will stay to-night; and if there is any trouble I will call you."

"But, my poor child," said Hilda, sweetly, "you have been here all day."

"Oh, well, it is his wish, and I will stay here all night."

Hilda remonstrated a little; but, finding that Zillah was determined, she retired, and Zillah passed all that night with the Earl. He was uneasy. A terror seemed to be over him. He insisted on holding Zillah's hand. At times he would start and look fearfully around. Was it Hilda whom he feared? Whatever his fear was, he said nothing; but after each start he would look eagerly up at Zillah, and press her hand faintly. And Zillah thought it was simply the disorder of his nervous system, or, perhaps, the effect of the medicines which he had taken. As to those medicines, she was most careful and most regular in administering them. Indeed, her very anxiety about these interfered with that watchfulness about the Earl himself which was the chief requisite. Fully conscious that she was painfully irregular and unmethodical, Zillah gave her chief thought to the passage of the hours, so that every medicine should be given at the right time.

It was a long night, but morning came at last, and with it came Hilda, calm, refreshed, affectionate, and sweet.

"How has he been, darling?" she asked.

"Quiet," said Zillah, wearily.

"That's right; and now, my dearest, go off and get some rest. You must be very tired."

"THE EARL GASPED—'JUDAS!'"

So Zillah went off, and Hilda remained with the Earl.

Day was just dawning when Zillah left the Earl's room. She stooped over him and kissed him. Overcome by fatigue, she did not think much of the earnest, wistful gaze which caught her eyes. Was it not the same look which he had fixed on her frequently before?

The Earl again drew her down as she clasped his hand. She stooped over him.

"I'm afraid of *her*," he said, in a low whisper. "Send Mrs. Hart."

Mrs. Hart? The Earl did not seem to know that she was ill. No doubt his mind was wandering. So Zillah thought, and the idea was natural. She thought she would humor the delirious fancy. So she promised to send Mrs. Hart.

"What did he say?" asked Hilda, following Zillah out. Zillah told her according to her own idea.

"Oh, it's only his delirium," said Hilda. "He'll take me for you when I go back. Don't let it trouble you. You might send Mathilde if you feel afraid; but I hardly think that Mathilde would be so useful here as I."

"*I* afraid? My dear Hilda, can I take his poor delirious fancy in earnest? Send Mathilde! I should hardly expect to see him alive again."

"Alive again!" said Hilda, with a singular intonation.

"Yes; Mathilde is an excellent maid, but in a sick-room she is as helpless as a child. She is far worse than I am. Do we ever venture to leave him alone with her?"

"Never mind. Do you go to sleep, darling, and sweet dreams to you."

They kissed, and Zillah went to her chamber.

It was about dawn, and the morning twilight but dimly illumined the hall. The Earl's room was dark, and the faint night light made objects only indistinctly perceptible. The Earl's white face was turned toward the door as Hilda entered, with imploring, wistful expectancy upon it. As he caught sight of Hilda the expression turned to one of fear—that same fear which Zillah had seen upon it. What did he fear? What was it that was upon his mind? What fearful thought threw its shadow over his soul?

Hilda looked at him for a long time in silence, her face calm and impassive, her eyes intent upon him. The Earl looked back upon her with unchanged fear—looking back thus out of his weakness and helplessness, with a fear that seemed in-

in earnest? Send Mathilde!
ect to see him alive again."
aid Hilda, with a singular in-

is an excellent maid, but is
s helpless as a child. She is
m. Do we ever venture to
h her?"
Do you go to sleep, darling,
o you."
Zillah went to her chamber.
n, and the morning twilight
the hall. The Earl's room
aint night light made objects
ceptible. The Earl's white
ward the door as Hilda en-
g, wistful expectancy upon
ight of Hilda the expression
r—that same fear which Zil-
. What did he fear? What
n his mind? What fearful
adow over his soul?
im for a long time in silence,
passive, her eyes intent upon
ked back upon her with un-
ng back thus out of his weak-
s, with a fear that seemed in-

sanified by the consciousness of that weakness. But Hilda's face softened not; no gleam of tenderness mitigated the hard lustre of her eyes; her expression lessened not from its set purpose. The Earl said not one word. It was not to her that he would utter the fear that was in him. Zillah had promised to send Mrs. Hart. When would Mrs. Hart come? Would she ever come, or would she never come? He looked away from Hilda feverishly, anxiously, to the door; he strained his ears to listen for footsteps. But no footsteps broke the deep stillness that reigned through the vast house, where all slept except these two who faced each other in the sick-room.

There was a clock at the end of the corridor outside, whose ticking sounded dull and muffled from the distance, yet it penetrated, with clear, sharp vibrations, to the brain of the sick man, and seemed to him, in the gathering excitement of this fearful hour, to grow louder and louder, till each tick sounded to his sharpened sense like the vibrations of a bell, and seemed to be the funeral knell of his destiny; sounding thus to his ears, solemnly, fatefully, bodingly; pealing forth thus with every sound the announcement that second after second out of those few minutes of time which were still left him had passed away from him forever. Each one of those seconds was prolonged to his excited sense to the duration of an hour. After each stroke he listened for the next, dreading to hear it, yet awaiting it, and all the while feeling upon him the eyes of one of whom he was to be the helpless, voiceless victim.

There had been but a few minutes since Zillah left, but they seemed like long terms of duration to the man who watched and feared. Zillah had gone, and would not return. Would Mrs. Hart ever come? Oh, could Mrs. Hart have known that this man, of all living beings, was thus watching and hoping for her, and that to this man of all others her presence would have given a heavenly peace and calm! If she could but have known this as it was then it would have roused her even from the bed of death, and brought her to his side though it were but to die at the first sight of him. But Mrs. Hart came not. She knew nothing of any wish for her. In her own extreme prostration she had found, after a wakeful night, a little blessed sleep, and the watcher watched in vain.

The clock tolled on.

Hilda looked out through the door. She turned and went out into the hall. She came back and looked around the room. She went to the window and looked out. The twilight was fading. The gloom was lessening from around the dim groves and shadowy trees. Morning was coming. She went back into the room, and once more into the hall. There she stood and listened. The Earl followed her with his eyes—eyes that were full of awful expectation.

Hilda came back. The Earl summoned all his strength, and uttered a faint cry. Hilda walked up to him; she stooped down over him. The Earl uttered another cry.

Hilda paused. Then she stooped down and kissed his forehead.

The Earl gasped. One word came hissing forth—

"Judas!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

ZILLAH had scarcely fallen asleep when a shrill cry roused her. She started up. Hilda stood by her side with wild excitement in her usually impassive face. A cold thrill ran through Zillah's frame. To see Hilda in any excitement was an unknown thing to her; but now this excitement was not concealed.

"Oh, my darling! my darling!" she cried.

"What? what?" Zillah almost screamed. "What is it? What has happened?" Fear told her. She knew what had happened. One thing, and one only, could account for this.

"He's gone! It's over! He's gone! He's gone! Oh, darling! How can I tell it? And so sudden! Oh, calm yourself!" And Hilda flung her arms about Zillah, and groaned.

Zillah's heart seemed to stand still. She flung off Hilda's arms, she tore herself away, and rushed to the Earl's room. Such a sudden thing as this—could it be? Gone! And it was only a few moments since she had seen his last glance, and heard his last words.

Yes; it was indeed so. There, as she entered that room, where now the rays of morning entered, she saw the form of her friend—that friend whom she called father, and loved as such. But the white face was no longer turned to greet her; the eyes did not seek hers, nor could that cold hand ever again return the pressure of hers. White as marble was that face now, still and set in the fixedness of death; cold as marble was now that hand which hers clasped in that first frenzy of grief and horror; cold as marble and as lifeless. Never again—never again might she hold commune with the friend who now was numbered with the dead.

She sat in that room stricken into dumbness by the shock of this sudden calamity. Time passed. The awful news flashed through the house. The servants heard it, and came silent and awe-struck to the room; but when they saw the white face, and the mourner by the bedside, they stood still, nor did they dare to cross the threshold. Suddenly, while the little group of servants stood there in that doorway, with the reverence which is always felt for death and for sorrow, there came one who forced her way through them and passed into the room. This one bore on her face the expression of a mightier grief than that which could be felt by any others—a grief unspeakable—beyond words, and beyond thought. White-haired, and with a face which now seemed turned to stone in the fixedness of its great agony, this figure tottered rather than walked into the room. There was no longer any self-restraint in this woman, who for years had lived under a self-restraint that never relaxed; there was no thought as to those who might see or hear; there was nothing but the utter abandonment of perfect grief—of grief which had reached its height and could know nothing more; there was nothing less than despair itself—that despair which arises when all is lost—as this woman flung herself past Zillah, as though she had a grief superior to Zillah's, and a right to pass even her in the terrible precedence of sorrow. It was thus that Mrs. Hart came before the presence of the dead, and flung herself upon the inanimate corpse, wailing for this

arms around that clay from which the soul had departed, and pressed her warm lips upon the cold brow from which the immortal dweller had passed away to its immortality.

In the depths of her own grief Zillah was roused by a cry which expressed a deeper grief than hers—a cry of agony—a cry of despair:

"Oh, my God! Oh, God of mercy! Dead! What? dead! Dead—and no explanation—no forgiveness!"

And Mrs. Hart fell down lifeless over the form of the dead.

Zillah rose with a wonder in her soul which alleviated the sorrow of bereavement. What was this? What did it mean?

"Explanation!" "Forgiveness!" What words were these? His housekeeper!—could she be any thing else? What had she done which required this lamentation? What was the Earl to *her*, that his death should cause such despair?

But amidst such thoughts Zillah was still considerate about this stricken one, and she called the servants, and they bore her away to her own room. This grief, from whatever cause it may have arisen, was too much for Mrs. Hart. Before this she had been prostrated. She now lost all consciousness, and lay in a stupor from which she could not be aroused.

The wondering questions which had arisen in Zillah's mind troubled her and puzzled her at first; but gradually she thought that she could answer them. Mrs. Hart, she thought, was wonderfully attached to the Earl. She had committed some imaginary delinquency in her management of the household, which, in her weak and semi-delirious state, was weighing upon her spirits. When she found that he was dead, the shock was great to one in her weak state, and she had only thought of some confession which she had wished to make to him.

When the doctor came that day he found Zillah still sitting there, holding the hand of the dead. Hilda came to tell all that she knew.

"About half an hour after Zillah left," she said, "I was sitting by the window, looking out to see the rising sun. Suddenly the Earl gave a sudden start, and sat upright in bed. I rushed over to him. He fell back. I chafed his hands and feet. I could not think, at first, that it was any thing more than a fainting fit. The truth gradually came to me. He was dead. An awful horror rushed over me. I fled from the room to Mrs. Molyneux, and roused her from sleep. She sprang up and hurried to the Earl. She knows the rest."

Such was Hilda's account.

As for the doctor, he could easily account for the sudden death. It was *mind*. His heart had been affected, and he had died from a sudden spasm. It was only through the care of Miss Krieff that the Earl had lived so long.

But so great was Hilda's distress that Zillah had to devote herself to the task of soothing her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A LETTER AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Some weeks passed, and Zillah's grief gradually became lessened. She was far better able to bear this blow at this time than that first crushing blow which a few years before had descended so suddenly upon her young life. She began to rally and to look forward to the future. Guy had been written to, not by her, but, as usual, by Hilda, in her name. The news of her father's death had been broken to him as delicately as possible. Hilda read it to Zillah, who, after a few changes of expression, approved of it. This letter had the effect of impressing upon Zillah's mind the fact that Guy must soon come home. The absence must cease. In any case it could not last much longer. Either she would have had to join him, or he come back to her. The prospect of his arrival now stood before her, and the question arose how to meet it. Was it welcome or unpleasant? After all, was he not a noble character, and a valiant soldier—the son of a dear friend? Zillah's woman's heart judged him not harshly, and much of her thought was taken up with conjectures as to the probable results of that return. She began at length to look forward to it with hope; and to think that she might be happy with such a man for her husband. The only thing that troubled her was the idea that any man, however noble, should have the right of claiming her as his without the preliminary wooing. To a delicate nature this was intolerable, and she could only trust that he would be acceptable to her on his first appearance.

In the midst of these thoughts a letter arrived from Guy, addressed to that one who was now beyond its reach. Zillah opened this without hesitation, for Lord Chetwynde had always been in the habit of handing them to her directly he had read them.

Few things connected with those whom we have loved and lost are more painful, where all is so exquisitely painful, than the reading of letters by them or to them. The most trivial commonplaces—the lightest expressions of regard—are all invested with the tenderest pathos, and from our hearts there seems rung out at every line the despairing refrain of "nevermore—nevermore." It was thus, and with blending tears, that Zillah read the first part of Guy's letter, which was full of tender love and thoughtful consideration. Soon, however, this sadness was dispelled; her attention was excited; and every other feeling was banished in her absorbing interest in what she read. After some preliminary paragraphs the letter went on thus:

"You will be astonished, my dear father, and, I hope, pleased, to learn that I have made up my mind to return to England as soon as possible. As you may imagine, this resolve is a sudden one, and I should be false to that perfect confidence which has always existed between us, if I did not frankly acquaint you with the circumstances which have led to my decision. I have often mentioned to you my friend Captain Cameron of the Royal Engineers, who is superintending the erection of some fortifications overlooking the mountain pass. Isolated as we are from all European society, we have naturally been thrown much together, and a firm friendship has grown up between us. We constituted him a member of our little mess, consisting of my two subalterns and myself, so that he has been virtually living with us ever since our arrival here.

"Not very long ago our little circle received a very important addition. This was Captain

Cameron's sister; who, having been left an orphan in England, and having no near relatives there, had come out to her brother. She was a charming girl. I had seen nothing of English ladies for a long time, and so it did not need much persuasion to induce me to go to Cameron's house after Miss Cameron had arrived. Circumstances, rather than any deliberate design on my part, drew me there more and more, till at length all my evenings were spent there, and, in fact, all my leisure time. I always used to join Miss Cameron and her brother on their morning rides and evening walks; and very often, if duty prevented him from accompanying her, she would ask me to take his place as her escort. She was as fond of music as I am; and, in the evenings we generally spent most of the time in playing or singing together. She played accompaniments to my songs, and I to hers. We performed duets together; and thus, whether in the house or out of it, were thrown into the closest possible intercourse. All this came about so naturally that several months had passed away in this familiar association before I began even to suspect danger, either for myself or for her. Suddenly, however, I awakened to the consciousness of the fact as it was. All my life was filled by Ines Cameron—all my future seemed as black as midnight apart from her. Never before had I felt even a passing interest in any woman. Bound as I had been all my life, in boyhood by honor, and in early manhood by legal ties, I had never allowed myself to think of any other woman; and I had always been on my guard so as not to drift into any of those flirtations with which men in general, and especially we officers, contrive to fritter away the freshness of affection. Inexperience, combined with the influence of circumstances, caused me to drift into this position; and the situation became one from which it was hard indeed to extricate myself. I had, however, been on my guard after a fashion. I had from the first scrupulously avoided those *galanteries* and *façons de parler* which are more usual in Indian society than elsewhere. Besides, I had long before made Cameron acquainted with my marriage, and had taken it for granted that Ines knew it also. I thought, even after I had found out that I loved her, that there was no danger for her—and that she had always merely regarded me as a married man and a friend. But one day an accident revealed to me that she knew nothing about my marriage, and had taken my attentions too favorably for her own peace of mind. Ah, dear father, such a discovery was bitter indeed in many ways. I had to crush out my love for my sake and for hers. One way only was possible, and that was to leave her forever. I at once saw Cameron, and told him frankly the state of the case, so far as I was concerned. Like a good fellow, as he was, he blamed himself altogether. 'You see, Molyneux,' he said, 'a fellow is very apt to overlook the possible attractiveness of his own sister.' He made no effort to prevent me from going, but evidently thought it my only course. I accordingly applied at once for leave, and to-night I am about to start for Calcutta, where I will wait till I gain a formal permit, and I will never see Ines again. I have seen her for the last time. Oh, father! those words of warning which you once spoke to me have become fatally true. Chetwynde has been too dearly bought. At this moment the weight of my chains is too heavy to be borne. If I could feel myself free once more, how gladly would I give up all my ancestral estates! What is Chetwynde to me? What happiness can I ever have in it now, or what happiness can there possibly be to me without Ines? Besides, I turn from the thought of her, with her refined beauty, her delicate nature, her innumerable accomplishments, her true and tender heart, and think of that other one, with her ungovernable passions, her unreasoning temper, and her fierce intractability, where I can see nothing but the soul of a savage, unredeemed by any womanly softness or feminine grace. Oh, father! was it well to bind me to a Hindu? You will say, perhaps, that I should not judge of the woman by the girl. But, father, when I saw her first at ten, I found her impish, and at fifteen, when I married her, she was no less so, only perhaps more intensified. Fierce words of insult were flung at me by that creature. My God! it is too bitter to think of. Her face is before me now, scowling and malignant, while behind it, mournful and pitying, yet loving, is the pale sweet face of Ines.

"But I dare not trust myself further. Never before have I spoken to you about the horror which I feel for that Hindu. I did not wish to pain you. I fear I am selfish in doing so now. But, after all, it is better for you to know it once for all. Otherwise the discovery of it would be all the worse. Besides, this is wrung out from me in spite of myself by the anguish of my heart.

"Let me do justice to the Hindu. You have spoken of her sometimes—not often, however, and I thank you for it—as a loving daughter to you. I thank her for that, I am sure. Small comfort, however, is this to me. If she were now an angel from heaven, she could not fill the place of Inez.

"Forgive me, dear father. This shall be the last of complaints. Henceforth I am ready to bear my griefs. I am ready for the sacrifice. I can not see *her* yet, but when I reach England I must see you somehow. If you can not meet me, you must manage to send her off to Pomeroy, so that I may see you in peace. With you I will forget my sorrows, and will be again a light-hearted boy.

"Let me assure you that I mean to keep my promise made years ago when I was a boy. It shall be the effort of my life to make my wife happy. Whether I succeed or not will be another thing. But I must have time.

"No more now. I have written about this for the first and the last time. Give my warmest and fondest love to nurse. I hope to see you soon, and remain, dear father,

"Your affectionate son,

"GUY MOLYNEUX."

For some time after reading this letter Zillah sat as if stunned. At first she seemed scarcely able to take in its full meaning. Gradually, however, it dawned upon her to its widest extent. This, then, was the future that lay before her, and this was the man for whose arrival she had been looking with such mingled feelings. Little need was there now for mingled feelings. She knew well with what feeling to

expect him. She had at times within the depths of her heart formed an idea that her life would not be loveless; but now—but now— This man who was her husband, and the only one to whom she could look for love—this man turned from her in horror; he hated her, he loathed her—worse, he looked upon her as a Hindu—worse still, if any thing could be worse, his hate and his loathing were made eternal; for he loved another with the ardor of a first fresh love, and his wife seemed to him a demon full of malignity, who stood between him and the angel of his heart and the heaven of his desires. His words of despair rang within her ears. The opprobrious epithets which he applied to her stung her to the quick. Passionate and hot-hearted, all her woman's nature rose up in arms at this horrible, this unlooked-for assault. All her pride surged up within her in deep and bitter resentment. Whatever she might once have been, she felt that she was different now, and deserved not this. At this moment she would have given worlds to be able to say to him, "You are free. Go, marry the woman whom you love." But it was too late.

Not the least did she feel Guy's declaration that he would try to make her happy. Her proud spirit chafed most at this. He was going to treat her with patient forbearance, and try to conceal his abhorrence. Could she endure this? Up and down the room she paced, with angry vehemence, asking herself this question.

She who had all her life been surrounded by idolizing love was now tied for life to a man whose highest desire with regard to her was that he might be able to endure her. In an agony of grief, she threw herself upon the floor. Was there no escape? she thought. None? none? Oh, for one friend to advise her!

The longer Zillah thought of her position the worse it seemed to her. Hours passed away, and she kept herself shut up in her room, refusing to admit any one, but considering what was best to do. One thing only appeared as possible under these circumstances, and that was to leave Chetwynde. She felt that it was simply impossible for her to remain there. And where could she go? To Pomeroy Court? But that had been handed over to him as part of the payment to him for taking her. She could not go back to a place which was now the property of this man. Nor was it necessary. She had money of her own, which would enable her to live as well as she wished. Thirty thousand pounds would give her an income sufficient for her wants; and she might find some place where she could live in seclusion. Her first wild thoughts were a desire for death; but since death would not come, she could at least so arrange matters as to be dead to this man. Such was her final resolve.

It was with this in her mind that she went out to Hilda's room. Hilda was writing as she entered, but on seeing her she hastily shut her desk, and sprang forward to greet her friend.

"My darling!" said she. "How I rejoice to see you! Is it some new grief? Will you never trust me? You are so reticent with me that it breaks my heart."

"Hilda," said she, "I have just been reading a letter from Lord Chetwynde to his father. He is about to return home."

Zillah's voice, as she spoke, was hard and metallic, and Hilda saw that something was wrong. She noticed that Zillah used the words Lord Chetwynde with stern emphasis, instead of the name Guy, by which she, like the rest, had always spoken of him.

"I am glad to hear it, dear," said Hilda, quietly, and in a cordial tone; "for, although you no doubt dread the first meeting, especially under such painful circumstances, yet it will be for your happiness."

"Hilda," said Zillah, with increased sternness, "Lord Chetwynde and I will never meet again."

Hilda started back with unutterable astonishment on her face.

"Never meet again!" she repeated—"not meet Lord Chetwynde—your husband? What do you mean?"

"I am going to leave Chetwynde as soon as possible, and shall never again cross its threshold."

Hilda went over to Zillah and put her arms around her.

"Darling," said she, in her most caressing tones, "you are agitated. What is it? You are in trouble. What new grief can have come to you? Will you not tell me? Is there any one living who can sympathize with you as I can?"

At these accents of kindness Zillah's fortitude gave way. She put her head on her friend's shoulder and sobbed convulsively. The tears relieved her. For a long time she wept in silence.

"I have no one now in the world but you, dearest Hilda. And you will not forsake me, will you?"

"Forsake you, my darling, my sister? forsake you? Never while I live! But why do you speak of flight and of being forsaken? What mad fancies have come over you?"

Zillah drew from her pocket the letter which she had read.

"Here," she said, "read this, and you will know all."

Hilda took the letter and read it in silence, all through, and then commencing it again, she once more read it through to the end.

Then she flung her arms around Zillah, impulsively, and strained her to her heart.

"You understand all now?"

"All," said Hilda.

"And what do you think?"

"Think! It is horrible!"

"What would you do?"

"I?" cried Hilda, starting up. "I would kill myself."

Zillah shook her head.

"I am not quite capable of that—not yet—though it may be in me to do it—some time. But now I can not. My idea is the same as yours, though. I will go into seclusion, and be dead to him, at any rate."

Hilda was silent for a few moments. Then she read the letter again.

"Zillah," said she, with a deep sigh, "it is very well to talk of killing one's self, as I did just now, or of running away; but, after all, other things must be considered. I spoke hastily; but I am calmer than you, and I ought to advise you calmly. After all, it is a very serious thing that you speak of; and, indeed, are

you capable of such a thing? Whatever I may individually think of your resolve, I know that you are doing what the world will consider madness; and it is my duty to put the case plainly before you. In the first place, then, your husband does not love you, and he loves another—very hard to bear, I allow; but men are fickle, and perhaps ere many months have elapsed he may forget the cold English beauty as he gazes on your Southern face. You are very beautiful, Zillah; and when he sees you he will change his tone. He may love you at first sight."

"Then I should despise him," said Zillah, hotly. "What kind of love is that which changes at the sight of every new face? Besides, you forget how he despises me. I am a Hindu in his eyes. Can contempt ever change into love? If such a miracle could take place, I should never believe in it. Those bitter words in that letter would always rankle in my heart."

"That is true," said Hilda, sorrowfully. "Then we will put that supposition from us. But, allowing you never gain your husband's love, remember how much there is left you. His position, his rank, are yours by right—you are Lady Chetwynde, and the mistress of Chetwynde Castle. You can fill the place with guests, among whom you will be queen. You may go to London during the season, take the position to which you are entitled there as wife of a peer, and, in the best society which the world affords, you will receive all the admiration and homage which you deserve. Beauty like yours, combined with rank and wealth, may make you a queen of society. Have you strength to forego all this, Zillah?"

"You have left one thing out in your brilliant picture," replied Zillah. "All this may, indeed, be mine—but—mine on sufferance. If I can only get this as Lord Chetwynde's wife, I beg leave to decline it. Besides, I have no ambition to shine in society. Had you urged me to remember all that the Earl has done for me, and try to endure the son for the sake of the father, that might possibly have had weight. Had you shown me that my marriage was irrevocable, and that the best thing was to accept the situation, and try to be a dutiful wife to the son of the man whom I called father, you might perhaps for a moment have shaken my pride. I might have stifled the promptings of those womanly instincts which have been so frightfully outraged, and consented to remain passively in a situation where I was placed by those two friends who loved me best. But when you speak to me of the dazzling future which may lie before me as Lord Chetwynde's wife, you remind me how little he is dependent for happiness upon anything that I can give him; of the brilliant career in society or in politics which is open to him, and which will render domestic life superfluous. I have thought over all this most fully; but what you have just said has thrown a new light upon it. In the quiet seclusion in which I have hitherto lived I had almost forgotten that there was an outside world, where men seek their happiness. Can you think that I am able to enter that world, and strive to be a queen of society, with no protecting love around me to warn me against its perils or to shield me from them? No! I see it all. Under no circumstances can I live with this man who abhors me. No toleration can be possible on either side. The best thing for me to do is to die. But since I can not die, the next best thing is to sink out of his view into nothingness. So, Hilda, I shall leave Chetwynde, and it is useless to attempt to dissuade me."

Zillah had spoken in low, measured tones, in words which were so formal that they sounded like a school-girl's recitation—a long, dull monotone—the monotony of despair. Her face drooped—her eyes were fixed on the floor—her white hands clasped each other, and she sat thus—an image of woe. Hilda looked at her steadily. For a moment there flashed over her lips the faintest shadow of a smile—the lips curled cruelly, the eyes gleamed coldly—but it was for a moment. Instantly it had passed, and as Zillah ceased, Hilda leaned toward her and drew her head down upon her breast.

"Ah, my poor, sweet darling! my friend! my sister! my noble Zillah!" she murmured. "I will say no more. I see you are fixed in your purpose. I only wished you to act with your eyes open. But of what avail is it? Could you live to be scorned—live on sufferance? Never! *I* would die first. What compensation could it be to be rich, or famous, when you were the property of a man who loathed you? Ah, my dear one! what am I saying? But you are right. Yes, sooner than live with that man I would kill myself."

A long silence followed.

"I suppose you have not yet made any plans, darling," said Hilda at last.

"Yes I have. A thousand plans at once came sweeping through my mind, and I have some general idea of what I am to do," said Zillah. "I think there will be no difficulty about the details. You remember, when I wished to run away, after dear papa's death—ah, how glad I am that I did not—how many happy years I should have lost—the question of money was the insuperable obstacle; but that is effectually removed now. You know my money is so settled that it is payable to my own checks at my bankers', who are not even the Chetwyndes' bankers; for the Earl thought it better to leave it with papa's men of business."

"You must be very careful," said Hilda, "to leave no trace by which Lord Chetwynde can find you out. You know that he will move heaven and earth to find you. His character and his strict ideas of honor would insure that. The mere fact that you bore his name, would make it gall and wormwood to him to be ignorant of your doings. Besides, he lays great stress on his promise to your father."

"He need not fear," said Zillah. "The dear old name, which I love almost as proudly as he does, shall never gain the lightest stain from me. Of course I shall cease to use it now. It would be easy to trace Lady Chetwynde to any place. My idea is, of course, to take an assumed name. You and I can live quietly and raise no suspicions that we are other than we seem. But, Hilda, are you sure that you are willing to go into exile with me? Can you endure it? Can you live with me, and share my monotonous life?"

Hilda looked steadily at Zillah, holding her hand the while.

"Zillah," said she, in a solemn voice, "whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest,

"WHITHER THOU GOEST, I WILL GO."

I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!"

A deep silence followed. Zillah pressed Hilda's hand and stifled a half sob.

"At my rate," said Hilda, "whoever else may fail you—you have, at least, one faithful heart—one friend on whom you can always rely. No, you need not thank me," said she, as Zillah fondly kissed her and was about to speak; "I am but a poor, selfish creature, after all. You know I could never be happy away from you. You know that there is no one in the world whom I love but you; and there is no other who loves me. Do I not owe every thing to General Pomeroy and to you, my darling?"

"Not more than I owe to you, dear Hilda. I feel ashamed when I think of how much I made you endure for years, through my selfish exactions and my ungovernable temper. But I have changed a little I think. The Earl's influence over me was for good, I hope. Dear Hilda, we have none but one another, and must cling together."

Silence then followed, and they sat for a long time, each wrapped up in plans for the future.

CHAPTER XXV.

CUTTING THE LAST TIE.

FEARFUL that her courage might fail if she gave herself any more time to reflect on what she was doing, Zillah announced to the household, before the close of that day, that the shock of Lord Chetwynde's death rendered a change necessary for her, and that she should leave home as soon as she could conveniently do so. She also told them of their master's expected return, and that every thing must be in readiness for his reception, so that, on her return, she might have no trouble before her. She gave some faint hints that she might probably meet him at London, in order to disarm suspicion, and also to make it easier for Chetwynde himself to conceal the fact of her flight, if he wished to do so. She never ceased to be thoughtful about protecting his honor, as far as possible.

The few days before Zillah's departure were among the most wretched she had ever known. The home which she so dearly loved, and which she had thought was to be hers forever, had to be left, because she felt that she was not wanted there. She went about the grounds, visited every favorite haunt and nook—the spots endeared to her by the remembrance of many happy hours passed among them—and her tears flowed fast and bitterly as she thought that she was now seeing them for the last time. The whole of the last day at Chetwynde she passed in the little church under which every Molyneux had been buried for centuries back. It was full of their marble effigies. Often had she watched the sunlight flickering over their pale sculptured faces. One of these forms had been her especial delight; for she could trace in his features a strong family resemblance to Lord Chetwynde. This one's name was Guy. Formerly she used to see a likeness between him and the Guy who was now alive. He had died in the Holy Land; but his bones had been brought home, that they might rest in the family vault. She had been fond of weaving romances as to his probable history and fate; but no thought of him was in her mind to-day, as she wept over the resting-place of one who had filled a father's place to her, or as she knelt and prayed in her desolation to Him who has promised to be a father to the fatherless. Earnestly did she entreat that His presence might be with her, His providence direct her lonely way. Poor child! In the wild impulsiveness of her nature she thought that the sacrifice which she was making of herself and her hopes would be acceptable to Him, and pleasing in His sight. She did not know that she was merely following her own will, and turning her back upon the path of duty. That duty lay in simple acceptance of the fate which seemed ordained for her, whether for good or evil. Happy marriages were never promised

as soon as she could conveniently do so. She also told them of their master's expected return, and that every thing must be in readiness for his reception, so that, on her return, she might have no trouble before her. She gave some faint hints that she might probably meet him at London, in order to disarm suspicion, and also to make it easier for Chetwynde himself to conceal the fact of her flight, if he wished to do so. She never ceased to be thoughtful about protecting his honor, as far as possible.

The few days before Zillah's departure were among the most wretched she had ever known. The home which she so dearly loved, and which she had thought was to be hers forever, had to

felt that she was not wanted bout the grounds, visited ev- nd nook—the spots endeared nbrance of many happy hours —and her tears flowed fast thought that she was now see- t time. The whole of the last he passed in the little church Malyneux had been buried for was full of their marble effi- e watched the sunlight flick- e sculptured faces. One of en her especial delight; for s features a strong family re- Chetwynde. This one's name she used to see a likeness be- Guy who was now alive. He y Land; but his bones had that they might rest in the nd been fond of weaving ro- bable history and fate; but was in her mind to-day, as esting-place of one who had to her, or as she knelt and tion to Him who has promo the fatherless. Earnestly His presence might be with direct her lonely way. Poor mpulsiveness of her nature acrifice which she was mak- r hoped might be acceptable in His sight. She did not merely following her own back upon the path of duty. ple acceptance of the fate d for her, whether for good riages were never promised

by Him; and, in flying from one which seemed to promise unhappiness, she forgot that "obedience is better than sacrifice," even though the sacrifice be that of one's self.

Twilight was fast closing in before she reached the castle, exhausted from the violence of her emotion, and faint and weak from her long fasting. Hilda expressed alarm at her protracted absence, and said that she was just about going in search of her. "My darling," said she, "you will wear away your strength. You are too weak now to leave. Let me urge you, for the last time, to stay; give up your mad resolution."

"No," said Zillah. "You know you yourself said that I was right."

"I did not say that you were right, darling. I said what I would do in your place; but I did not at all say, or even hint, that it would be right."

"Never mind," said Zillah, wearily; "I have nerved myself to go through with it, and I can do it. The worst bitterness is over now. There is but one thing more for me to do, and then the ties between me and Chetwynde are severed forever."

At Hilda's earnest entreaty she took some refreshment, and then lay down to rest; but, feeling too excited to sleep, she got up to accomplish the task she had before her. This was to write a letter to her husband, telling him of her departure, and her reason for doing so. She wished to do this in as few words as possible, to show no signs of bitterness toward him, or of her own suffering. So she wrote as follows:

"Chetwynde Castle, *March* 30, 1859.

"My Lord,—Your last letter did not reach Chetwynde Castle until after your dear father had been taken from us. It was therefore opened and read by me. I need not describe what my feelings were on reading it; but will only say, that if it were possible for me to free you from the galling chains that bind you to me, I would gladly do so. But, though it be impossible for me to render you free to marry her whom you love, I can at least rid you of my hated presence. I can not die; but I can be as good as dead to you. To-morrow I shall leave Chetwynde forever, and you will never see my face again. Search for me, were you inclined to make it, will be useless. I shall probably depart from England, and leave no trace of my whereabouts. I shall live under an assumed name, so as not to let the noble name of Chetwynde suffer any dishonor from *me*. If I *die*, I will take care to have the news sent to you.

"Do not think that I blame you. A man's love is not under his own control. Had I remained, I know that, as your wife, I should have experienced the utmost kindness and consideration. Such kindness, however, to a nature like mine would have been only galling. Something more than cold civility is necessary in order to render endurable the daily intercourse of husband and wife. Therefore I do not choose to subject myself to such a life.

"In this, the last communication between us, I must say to you what I intended to reserve until I could say it in person. It needed but a few weeks' intimate association with your dear father, whom I loved as my father, and whom I called by that name, to prove how utterly I had been mistaken as to the motives and circumstances that led to our marriage. I had his full and free forgiveness for having doubted him; and I now, as a woman, beg to apologize to you for all that I might have said as a passionate girl.

"Let me also assure you, my lord, of my deep sympathy for you in the trial which awaits you on your return, when you will find Chetwynde Castle deprived of the presence of that father whom you love. I feel for you and with you. My loss is only second to yours; for, in your father, I lost the only friend whom I possessed.

"Yours, very respectfully,

"Zillah."

Hilda of course had to copy this; for the objection to Zillah's writing was as strong as before, and an explanation was now more difficult to make than ever. Zillah, however, read it in Hilda's handwriting, and then Hilda took it, as she always did, to inclose it for the mail.

She took it to her own room, drew from her desk a letter which was addressed to Guy, and this was the one which she posted. Zillah's letter was carefully destroyed. Yet Zillah went with Hilda to the post-office, so anxious was she about her last letter, and saw it dropped in the box, as she supposed.

Then she felt that she had cut the last tie.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FLIGHT AND REFUGE.

About a fortnight after the events narrated in our last chapter a carriage stopped before the door of a small cottage situated in the village of Tenby on the coast of Pembrokeshire. Two ladies in deep mourning got out of it, and entered the gate of the garden which lay between them and the house; while a maid descended from the rumble, and in voluble French, alternating with broken English, besought the coachman's tender consideration for the box which he was handing down in a manner expressive of energy and expedition, rather than any regard for their contents. A resounding "thump" on the ground, caused by the sudden descent of one of her precious charges, elicited a cry of agony from the Frenchwoman, accompanied by the pathetic appeal:

"Oh, mon Dieu! Qu'est ce que vous faites là? Prenez garde donc!"

This outbreak attracted the attention of the ladies, who turned round to witness the scene. On seeing distress depicted on every lineament of her faithful Abigail's face, the younger of the two said, with a faint smile:

"Poor Mathilde! That man's rough handling will break the boxes and her heart at the same time. But after all it will only anticipate the unhappy end, for I am sure that she will die of grief and ennui when she sees the place we have brought her to. She thought it dreadful at Chetwynde that there were so few to see and to appreciate the results of her skill, yet even there a few could occasionally be found to dress me for. But when she finds that I utterly repudiate French toilettes for sitting upon the rocks, and that the neighboring fishermen are not as a rule judges of the latest coiffure, I am afraid to think of the

consequences. Will it be any thing less than a suicide, do you think, Hilda?"

"Well, Zillah," said Hilda, "I advised you not to bring her. A secret intrusted to many ceases to be a secret. It would have been better to leave behind you all who had been connected with Chetwynde, but especially Mathilde, who is both silly and talkative."

"I know that her coming is sorely against your judgment, Hilda; but I do not think that I run any risk. I know you despise me for my weakness, but I really like Mathilde, and could not give her up and take a new maid, unless I had to. She is very fond of me, and would rather be with me, even in this outlandish place, than in London, even, with any one else. You know I am the only person she has lived with in England. She has no friends in the country, so her being French is in her favor. She has not the least idea in what county 'ce cher mais triste Shateveen' is situated; so she could not do much harm even if she would, especially as her pronunciation of the name is more likely to bewilder than to instruct her hearers."

By this time they had entered the house, and Zillah, putting her arm in Hilda's, proceeded to inspect the mansion. It was a very tiny one; the whole house could conveniently have stood in the Chetwynde drawing-room; but Zillah declared that she delighted in its snugness. Every thing was exquisitely neat, both within and without. The place had been obtained by Hilda's diligent search. It had belonged to a coast-guard officer who had recently died, and Hilda, by means of Gualtier, obtained possession of the whole place, furniture and all, by paying a high rent to the widow. A housekeeper and servants were included in the arrangements. Zillah was in ecstasies with her drawing-room, which extended the whole length of the house, having at the front an alcove window looking upon the balcony and thence upon the sea, and commanding at the back a beautiful view of the mountains beyond. The views from all the windows were charming, and from garret to cellar the house was nicely furnished and well appointed, so that after hunting into every nook and corner the two friends expressed themselves delighted with their new home.

The account which they gave of themselves to those with whom they were brought in contact was a very simple one, and not likely to excite suspicion. They were sisters—the Misses Lorton—the death of their father not long before had rendered them orphans. They had no near relations, but were perfectly independent as to means. They had come to Tenby for the benefit of the sea air, and wished to lead as quiet and retired a life as possible for the next two years. They had brought no letters, and they wished for no society.

They soon settled down into their new life, and their days passed happily and quietly. Neither of them had ever lived near the sea before, so that it was now a constant delight to them. Zillah would sit for hours on the shore, watching the breakers dashing over the rocks beyond, and tumbling at her feet; or she would play like a child with the rising tide, trying how far she could run out with the receding wave before the next white-crested billow should come seething and foaming after her, as if to punish her for her temerity in venturing within the precincts of the mighty ocean. Hilda always accompanied her, but her amusements took a much more ambitious turn. She had formed a passion for collecting marine curiosities; and while Zillah sat dreamily watching the waves, she would clamber over the rocks in search of sea-weeds, limpets, anemones, and other things of the kind, shouting out gladly whenever she had found any thing new. Gradually she extended her rambles, and explored all the coast within easy walking distance, and became familiar with every bay and outlet within the circuit of several miles. Zillah's strength had not yet fully returned, so that she was unable to go on these long rambles.

One day Zillah announced an intention of taking a drive inland, and urged Hilda to come with her.

"Well, dear, I would rather not unless you really want me to. I want very much to go on the shore to-day. I found some beautiful specimens on the cliffs last night; but it was growing too late for me to secure them, so I determined to do so as early as possible this afternoon."

"Oh," said Zillah, with a laugh, "I should not dream of putting in a rivalry with your new passion. I should not stand a chance against a shrimp; but I hope your new aquarium will soon make its appearance, or else some of your pets will come to an untimely end, I fear. I heard the house-maid this morning vowing vengeance against 'them nasty smellin' things as Miss Lorton were always a-litterin' the house with.'"

"She will soon get rid of them, then. The man has promised me the aquarium in two or three days, and it will be the glory of the whole establishment. But now—good-by, darling—I must be off at once, so as to have as much daylight as possible."

"You will be back before me, I suppose."

"Very likely; but if I am not, do not be anxious. I shall stay on the cliffs as late as I can."

"Oh, Hilda! I do not like your going alone. Won't you take John with you? I can easily drive by myself."

"Any fate rather than that," said Hilda, laughing. "What could I do with John?"

"Take Mathilde, then, or one of the maids."

"Mathilde! My dear girl, what are you thinking of? You know she has never ventured outside of the garden gate since we have been here. She shudders whenever she looks at 'cette vilaine mer,' and no earthly consideration could induce her to put her foot on the shore. But what has put it in your head that I should want any one with me to-day, when I have gone so often without [illegible]ector?"

"I don't [illegible]," said Zillah. "You spoke about not being home till late, and I felt nervous."

"You need not be uneasy then, darling, on that account. I shall leave the cliffs early. I only want to be untrammeled, so as to ramble about at random. At any rate I shall be home in good time for dinner, and will be as hungry as a hunter, I promise you. I only want you not to fret your foolish little head if I am not here at the very moment I expect."

"Very well," said Zillah, "I will not, and I must not keep you talking any longer."

"Au revoir," said Hilda, kissing her. "Au revoir," she repeated, gayly.

Zillah smiled, and as she rose to go and dress for the drive Hilda took her path to the cliffs.

It was seven o'clock when Zillah returned.

"Is Miss Lorton in?" she asked, as she entered.

"No, miss," answered the maid.

"I will wait dinner then," said Zillah; and after changing her things she went out on the balcony to wait for Hilda's return.

Half an hour passed, and Hilda did not come. Zillah grew anxious, and looked incessantly at her watch. Eight o'clock came—a quarter after eight.

Zillah could stand it no longer. She sent for John.

"John," said she, "I am getting uneasy about Miss Lorton. I wish you would walk along the beach and meet her. It is too late for her to be out alone."

John departed on his errand, and Zillah felt a sense of relief at having done something, but this gave way to renewed anxiety as time passed, and they did not appear. At length, after what seemed an age to the suffering girl, John returned, but alone.

"Have you not found her?" Zillah almost shrieked.

"No, miss," said the man, in a pitying tone.

"Then why did you come back?" she cried. "Did I not tell you to go on till you met her?"

"I went as far as I could, miss."

"What do you mean?" she asked, in a voice pitched high with terror.

The man came close up to her, sympathy and sorrow in his face.

"Don't take on so, miss," said he; "and don't be downhearted. I dare say she has took the road, and will be home shortly; that way is longer, you know."

"No; she said she would come by the shore. Why did you not go on till you met her?"

"Well, miss, I went as far as Lovers' Bay; but the tide was in, and I could go no farther."

Zillah, at this, turned deadly white, and would have fallen if John had not caught her. He placed her on the sofa and called Mathilde.

Zillah's terror was not without cause. Lovers' Bay was a narrow inlet of the sea, formed by two projecting promontories. At low tide a person could walk beyond these promontories along the shore; but at high tide the water ran up within; and there was no standing room any where within the inclosure of the precipitous cliff. At half tide, when the tide was falling, one might enter here; but if the tide was rising, it was of course not to be attempted. Several times strangers had been entrapped here, sometimes with fatal results. The place owed its name to the tragical end which was met with here by a lover who was eloping with his lady. They fled by the shore, and came to the bay, but found that the rising tide had made the passage of the further ledge impossible. In despair the lover seized the lady, and tried to swim with her around this obstacle, but the waves proved stronger than love; the currents bore them out to sea; and the next morning their bodies were found floating on the water, with their arms still clasped around one another in a death embrace. Such was the origin of the name; and the place had always been looked upon by the people here with a superstitious awe, as a place of danger and death.

The time, however, was one which demanded action; and Zillah, hastily gulping down some restoratives which Mathilde had brought, began to take measures for a search.

"John," said she, "you must get a boat, and go at once in search of Miss Lorton. Is there nowhere any standing room in the bay—no crevice in the rocks where one may find a foothold?"

"Not with these spring-tides, miss," said John. "A man might cling a little while to the rocks; but a weak lady—" John hesitated.

"Oh, my God!" cried Zillah, in an agony; "she may be clinging there now, with every moment lessening her chance! Fly to the nearest fishermen, John! Ten pounds apiece if you get to the bay within half an hour! And any thing you like if you only bring her back safe!"

Away flew John, descending the rocks to the nearest cottage. There he breathlessly stated his errand; and the sturdy fisherman and his son were immediately prepared to start. The boat was launched, and they set out. It was slightly cloudy, and there seemed some prospect of a storm. Filled with anxiety at such an idea, and also inspired with enthusiasm by the large reward, they put forth their utmost efforts; and the boat shot through the water at a most unwonted pace. Twenty minutes after the boat had left the strand it had reached the bay. All thought of mere reward faded out soon from the minds of these honest men. They only thought of the young lady whom they had often seen along the shore, who might even now be in the jaws of death. Not a word was spoken. The sound of the waves, as they dashed on the rocks, alone broke the stillness. Trembling with excitement, they swept the boat close around the rocky promontory. John, standing up in the bow, held aloft a lantern, so that every cranny of the rocks might be brought out into full relief. At length an exclamation burst from him.

"Oh, Heavens! she's been here!" he groaned.

The men turned and saw in his hand the covered basket which Hilda always took with her on her expeditions to bring home her specimens. It seemed full of them now.

"Where did you find it?" they asked.

"Just on this here ledge of rock."

"She has put it down to free her hands. She may be clinging yet," said the old fisherman. "Let us call."

A loud cry, "Miss Lorton!" rang through the bay. The echo sent it reverberating back; but no human voice mingled with the sound.

Despondingly and fearfully they continued the search, still calling at times, until at last, as they reached the outer point, the last hope died, and they ceased calling.

"I'm afeard she's gone," said John.

The men shook their heads. John but expressed the general opinion.

"God help that poor young thing at the cottage!" said the older fisherman. "She'll be mighty cut up, I take it, now."

"They was all in all to each other," said John, with a sigh.

By this time they had rounded the point. Suddenly John, who had sat down again, called out:

"Stop! I see something on the water yonder!"

"SHE CLUTCHED HIS ARM IN A CONVULSIVE GRASP."

The men looked in the direction where he pointed, and a small object was visible on the surface of the water. They quickly rowed toward it. It was a lady's hat, which John instantly recognized as Hilda's. The long crape veil seemed to have caught in a stake which arose from the sandy beach above the water, placed there to mark some water level, and the hat floated there. Reverently, as though they were touching the dead, did those rough men disentangle the folds, and lay the hat on the basket.

"There is no hope now," said the younger fisherman, after a solemn silence. "May our dear Lord and our Blessed Lady," he added, crossing himself as he spoke, "have mercy on her soul!"

"Amen!" repeated the others, gently.

"However shall I tell my poor little missis," said John, wiping his eyes.

The others made no response. Soon they reached the shore again. The old man whispered a few words to his son, and then turned to John:

"I say, comrade," said he; "don't let *her*—" a jerk of his head in the direction of the cottage indicated to whom the pronoun referred—"don't let *her* give us that. We've done naught but what we'd have done for any poor creature among these rocks. We couldn't take pay for this night's job—my son nor me. And all we wish is, that it had been for some good; but it wasn't the Lord's will; and it ain't for us to say nothin' agin that; only you'll tell your missis, when she be's a bit better, that we made bold to send her our respectful sympathy."

John gave this promise to the honest fellows, and then went slowly and sadly back to make his mournful report.

During John's absence Zillah had been waiting in an agony of suspense, in which Mathilde made feeble efforts to console her. Wringing her hands, she walked up and down in front of the house; and at length, when she heard footsteps coming along the road, she rushed in that direction.

She recognized John. So great was her excitement that she could not utter one word. She clutched his arm in a convulsive grasp. John said nothing. It was easier for him to be silent. In fact he had something which was more eloquent than words. He mournfully held out the basket and the hat.

In an instant Zillah recognized them. She shrieked, and fell speechless and senseless on the hard ground.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN ASTOUNDING LETTER.

It needed but this new calamity to complete the sum of Zillah's griefs. She had supposed that she had already suffered as much as she could. The loss of her father, the loss of the Earl, the separation from Mrs. Hart, were each successive stages in the descending scale of her calamities. Nor was the least of these that Indian letter which had sent her into voluntary banishment from her home. It was not till all was over that she learned how completely her thoughts had associated themselves with the plans of the Earl, and how insensibly her whole future had become penetrated with plans about Guy. The overthrow of all this was bitter; but this, and all other griefs, were forgotten in the force of this new sorrow, which, while it was the last, was in reality the greatest. Now, for the first time, she felt how dear Hilda had been to her. She had been more than a friend—she had been an elder sister. Now, to Zillah's affectionate heart, there came the recollection of all the patient love, the kind forbearance, and the wise counsel of this matchless friend. Since childhood they had been inseparable. Hilda had rivaled even her doting father in perfect submission to all her caprices, and indulgence of all her whims. Zillah had matured so rapidly, and had changed so completely, that she now looked upon her former willful and passionate childhood with impatience, and could estimate at its full value that wonderful meekness with which Hilda had endured her wayward and imperious nature. Not one recollection of Hilda came to her but was full of incidents of a love and devotion passing the love of a sister.

It was now, since she had lost her, that she learned to estimate her, as she thought, at her full value. That loss seemed to her the greatest of all; worse than that of the Earl; worse even than that of her father. Never more should she experience that tender love, that wise patience, that unruffled serenity, which she had always known from Hilda. Never more should she possess one devoted friend—the true and tried friend of a life—to whom she might go in any sorrow, and know and feel that she would receive the sympathy of love and the counsel of wisdom. Nevermore—no, nevermore! Such was the refrain that seemed constantly to ring in her ears, and she found herself murmuring those despairing lines of Poe, where the solitary word of the Raven seems

"Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never—nevermore!'"

It was awful to her to be, for the first time in her life, alone in the world. Hitherto, amidst her bitterest afflictions, she had always had some one whom she loved. After her father's death she had Lord Chetwynde and Mrs. Hart; and with these she always had Hilda. But now all were gone, and Hilda was gone. To a passionate and intense nature like hers, sorrow was capable of giving pangs which are unknown to colder hearts, and to she suffered to a degree which was commensurate with her ardent temperament.

Weeks passed on. Recovering from the first shock, she sank into a state of dreamy listlessness, which, however, was at times interrupted by some wild hopes which would intrude in spite of herself. These hopes were that Hilda, after all, might not be lost. She might have been found by some one and carried off somewhere. Wild enough were these hopes, and Zillah saw this plainly, yet still they would intrude. Yet, far from proving a solace, they only made her situation worse, since they kept her in a state of constant suspense—a suspense, too, which had no shadow of a foundation in reason. So, alone, and struggling with the darkest despair, Zillah passed the time, without having sufficient energy of mind left to think about her future, or the state of her affairs.

As to her affairs—she was nothing better than a child. She had a vague idea that she was rich; but she had no idea of where her money might be. She knew the names of her London agents; but whether they held any funds of hers or not, she could not tell. She took it for granted that they did. Child as she was, she did not know even the common mode of drawing a check. Hilda had done that for her since her flight from Chetwynde.

The news of the unhappy fate of the elder Miss Lorton had sent a shock through the quiet village of Tenby, and every where might be heard expressions of the deepest sympathy with the younger sister, who seemed so gentle, so innocent, so inexperienced, and so affectionate. All had heard of the anguish into which she had been thrown by the news of the fearful calamity, and a respectful commiseration for a grief so great was exhibited by all. The honest fishermen who had gone first on the search on that eventful night had not been satisfied, but early on the following morning had roused all the fishing population, and fifty or sixty boats started off before dawn to scour the coast, and to examine the sea bottom. This they kept up for two or three days; but without success. Then, at last, they gave up the search. Nothing of this, however, was known to Zillah, who, at that particular time, was in the first anguish of her grief, and lay prostrated in mind and body. Even the chattering Mathilde was awed by the solemnity of woe.

The people of Tenby were nearly all of the humbler class. The widow who owned the house had moved away, and there were none with whom Zillah could associate, except the rector and his wife. They were old people, and had no children. The Rev. Mr. Harvey had lived there all his life, and was now well advanced in years. At the first tidings of the mournful event he had gone to Zillah's house to see if he could be of any assistance; but finding that she was ill in bed, he had sent his wife to offer her services. Mrs. Harvey had watched over poor Zillah in her grief, and had soothed her too. Mathilde would have been but a poor nurse for one in such a situation, and Mrs. Harvey's motherly care and sweet words of consolation had something, at least, to do with Zillah's recovery.

When she was better, Mrs. Harvey urged her to come and stay with them for a time. It would give her a change of scene, she said, and that

was all-important. Zillah was deeply touched by her affectionate solicitude, but declined to leave her house. She felt, she said, as though solitude would be best for her under such circumstances.

"My dear child," said Mrs. Harvey, who had formed almost a maternal affection for Zillah, and had come to address her always in that way—"my dear child, you should not try to deepen your grief by staying here and brooding over it. Every thing here only makes it worse. You must really come with me, if for only a few days, and see if your distress will not be lightened somewhat."

But Zillah said that she could not bear to leave, that the house seemed to be filled with Hilda's presence, and that as long as she was there there was something to remind her of the one she had lost. If she went away she should only long to go back.

"But, my child, would it not be better for you to go to your friends?" said Mrs. Harvey, as delicately as possible.

"I have no friends," said Zillah, in a faltering voice. "They are all gone."

Zillah burst into tears; and Mrs. Harvey, after weeping with her, took her departure, with her heart full of fresh sympathy for one so sweet, and so unhappy.

Time passed on, and Zillah's grief had settled down into a quiet melancholy. The rector and his wife were faithful friends to this friendless girl, and, by a thousand little acts of sympathy, strove to alleviate the distress of her lonely situation. For all this Zillah felt deeply grateful, but nothing that they might do could raise her mind from the depths of grief into which it had fallen. But at length there came a day which was to change all this.

That day she was sitting by the front window in the alcove, looking out to where the sea was rolling in its waves upon the shore. Suddenly, to her surprise, she saw the village postman, who had been passing along the road, open her gate, and come up the path. Her first thought was that her concealment had been discovered, and that Guy had written to her. Then a wild thought followed that it was somehow connected with Hilda. But soon these thoughts were banished by the supposition that it was simply a note for one of the servants. After this she fell into her former melancholy, when suddenly she was roused by the entrance of John, who had a letter in his hand.

"A letter for you, miss," said John, who had no idea that Zillah was of a dignity which deserved the title of "my lady."

Zillah said not a word. With a trembling hand she took the letter and looked at it.

It was covered with foreign post-marks, but this she did not notice. It was the handwriting which excited her attention.

"Hilda!" she cried, and sank back breathless in her chair. Her heart throbbed as though it would burst. For a moment she could not move; but then, with a violent effort, she tore open the letter, and, in a wild fever of excited feeling, read the following:

"NAPLES, *June* 1, 1859.

"MY OWN DEAREST DARLING,—What you must have suffered in the way of wonder about my sudden disappearance, and also in anxiety about your poor Hilda, I can not imagine. I know that you love me dearly, and for me to vanish from your sight so suddenly and so strangely must have caused you at least *some* sorrow. If you *have* been sorrowing for me, my sweetest, do not do so any more. I am safe and almost well, though I have had a strange experience.

"When I left you on that ill-fated evening I expected to be back as I said. I walked up the beach thoughtlessly, and did not notice the tide or any thing about it. I walked a long distance, and at last felt tired, for I had done a great deal that day. I happened to see a boat drawn up on the shore, and it seemed to be a good place to sit down and rest. I jumped in and sat down on one of the seats. I took off my hat and scarf, and luxuriated in the fresh sea breeze that was blowing over the water. I do not know how long I sat there—I did not think of it at that time, but at last I was roused from my pleasant occupation very suddenly and painfully. All at once I made the discovery that the boat *was moving under me*. I looked around in a panic. To my horror, I found that I was at a long distance from the shore. In an instant the truth flashed upon me. The tide had risen, the boat had floated off, and I had not noticed it. I was fully a mile away when I made this discovery, and, cool as I am (*according to you*), I assure you I nearly *died* of terror when the full reality of my situation occurred to me. I looked all around, but saw no chance of help. Far away on the horizon I saw numerous sails, and nearer to me I saw a steamer, but all were too distant to be of any service. On the shore I could not see a living soul.

"After a time I rallied from my panic, and began to try to get the boat back. But there were no oars, although, if there had been, I do not see how I could have used them. In my desperate efforts I tried to paddle with my hands, but, of course, it was utterly useless. In spite of all my efforts I drifted away further and further, and after a very long time, I do not know how long, I found that I was at an immense distance from the shore. Weakened by anxiety and fear, and worn out by my long-continued efforts, I gave up, and, sitting down again, I burst into a passion of tears. The day was passing on. Looking at the sun I saw that it was the time when you would be expecting me back. I thought of you, my darling, waiting for me—expecting me—wondering at my delay. How I cursed my folly and thoughtlessness in ever venturing into such danger! I thought of your increasing anxiety as you waited, while still I did not come. I thought, Oh, if she only knew where her poor Hilda is—what agony it would give her! But such thoughts were heart-breaking, and at last I dared not entertain them, and so I tried to turn my attention to the misery of my situation. Ah, my dearest, think—only think of me, your poor Hilda, in that boat, drifting helplessly along over the sea out into the ocean!

"With each moment my anguish grew greater. I saw no prospect of escape or of help. No ships came near; no boats of any kind were visible. I strained my eyes till they ached, but could see nothing that gave me hope. Oh, my darling, how can I tell you the miseries of that fearful time! Worse than all, do what I might,

DRIFTING OUT TO SEA.

I still could not keep away from me the thoughts of you, my sweetest. Still they would come—and never could I shake off the thought of your face, pale with loving anxiety, as you waited for that friend of yours who would never appear. Oh, had you seen me as I was—had you but imagined, even in the faintest way, the horrors that surrounded me, what would have been your feelings! But you could never have conceived it. No. Had you conceived it you would have sent every one forth in search of me.

"To add to my grief, night was coming on. I saw the sun go down, and still there was no prospect of escape. I was cold and wretched, and my physical sufferings were added to those of my mind. Somehow I had lost my hat and scarf overboard. I had to endure the chill wind that swept over me, the damp piercing blast that came over the waters, without any possibility of shelter. At last I grew so cold and benumbed that I lay down in the bottom of the boat, with the hope of getting out of the way of the wind. It was indeed somewhat more sheltered, but the shelter at best was but slight. I had nothing to cover myself with, and my misery was extreme.

"The twilight increased, and the wind grew stronger and colder. Worst of all, as I lay down and looked up, I could see that the clouds were gathering, and knew that there would be a storm. How far I was out on the sea I scarcely dared conjecture. Indeed, I gave myself up for lost, and had scarcely any hope. The little hope that was left was gradually driven away by the gathering darkness, and at length all around me was black. It was night. I raised myself up, and looked feebly out upon the waves. They were all hidden from my sight. I fell back, and lay there for a long time, enduring horrors, which, in my wildest dreams, I had never imagined as liable to fall to the lot of any miserable human being.

"I know nothing more of that night, or of several nights afterward. When I came back to consciousness I found myself in a ship's cabin, and was completely bewildered. Gradually, however, I found out all. This ship, which was an Italian vessel belonging to Naples, and was called the *Vittoria*, had picked me up on the morning after I had drifted away. I was unconscious and delirious. They took me on board, and treated me with the greatest kindness. For the tender care which was shown me by these rough but kindly hearts Heaven only can repay them; I can not. But when I had recovered consciousness several days had elapsed, the ship was on her way to Naples, and we were already off the coast of Portugal. I was overwhelmed with astonishment and grief. Then the question arose, What was I to do? The captain, who seemed touched to the heart by my sorrow, offered to take the ship out of her course and land me at Lisbon, if I liked; or he would put me ashore at Gibraltar. Miserable me! What good would it do for me to be landed at Lisbon or at Gibraltar? Wide seas would still intervene between me and my darling. I could not ask them to land me at either of those places. Besides, the ship was going to Naples, and that seemed quite as near as Lisbon, if not more so. It seemed to me to be more accessible—more in the line of travel—and therefore I thought that by going on to Naples I would really be more within your reach than if I landed at any intervening point. So I decided to go on.

"Poor me! Imagine me on board a ship, with no change of clothing, no comforts or deli-

cacies of any kind, and at the same time prostrated by sickness arising from my first misery. It was a kind of low fever, combined with delirium, that affected me. Most fortunately for me, the captain's wife sailed with him, and to her I believe my recovery is due. Poor dear Margarita! Her devotion to me saved me from death. I gave her that gold necklace that I have worn from childhood. In no other way could I fittingly show my gratitude. Ah, my darling! the world is not all bad. It is full of honest, kindly hearts, and of them all none is more noble or more pure than my generous friend the simple wife of Captain Gaddagli. May Heaven bless her for her kindness to the poor lost stranger who fell in her way!

"My sweet Zillah, how does all this read to you? Is it not wildly improbable? Can you imagine your Hilda floating out to sea, senseless, picked up by strangers, carried off to foreign countries? Do you not rejoice that it was so, and that you do not have to mourn my death? My darling, I need not ask. Alas! what would I not give to be sitting with your arms around me, supporting my aching head, while I told you of all my suffering?

"But I must go on. My exposure during that dreadful night had told fearfully upon me. During the voyage I could scarcely move. Toward its close, however, I was able to go on deck, and the balmy air of the Mediterranean revived me. At length we reached Naples Bay. As we sailed up to the city, the sight of all the glorious scenery on every side seemed to fill me with new life and strength. The cities along the shore, the islands, the headlands, the mountains, Vesuvius, with its canopy of smoke, the intensely blue sky, the clear transparent air, all made me feel as though I had been transported to a new world.

"I went at once to the Hôtel de l'Europe, on the Strada Toledo. It is the best hotel here, and is very comfortable. Here I must stay for a time, for, my darling, I am by no means well. The doctor thinks that my lungs are affected. I have a very bad cough. He says that even if I were able to travel, I must not think of going home yet, the air of Naples is my only hope, and he tells me to send to England for my friends. My friends! What friends have I? None. But, darling, I know that I have a friend—one who would go a long distance for her poor suffering Hilda. And now, darling, I want you to come on. I have no hesitation in asking this, for I know that you do not feel particularly happy where you are, and you would rather be with me than be alone. Besides, my dearest, it is to Naples that I invite you—to Naples, the fairest, loveliest place in all the world! a heaven upon earth! where the air is balm, and every scene is perfect beauty! You must come on, for your own sake as well as mine. You will be able to rouse yourself from your melancholy. We will go together to visit the sweet scenes that lie all around here; and when I am again by your side, with your hand in mine, I will forget that I have ever suffered.

"Do not be alarmed at the journey. I have thought out all for you. I have written to Mr. Gualtier, in London, and asked him to bring you on here. He will be only too glad to do us this service. He is a simple-minded and kind-hearted man. I have asked him to call on you immediately to offer his services. You will see him, no doubt, very soon after you get this letter. Do not be afraid of troubling him. We can compensate him fully for the loss of his time.

"And now, darling, good-by. I have written a very long letter, and feel very tired. Come on soon, and do not delay. I shall count the days and the hours till you join me. Come on soon, and do not disappoint your loving

"HILDA.

"P.S. — When you come, will you please bring on my tarquoise brooch and my green bracelet. The little writing-desk, too, I should like, if not too much trouble. Of course you need not trouble about the house. It will be quite safe as it stands, under the care of your housekeeper and servants, till we get back again to England. Once more, darling, good-by.

"H."

This astonishing letter was read by Zillah with a tumult of emotions that may be imagined but not described. As she finished it the reaction in her feelings was too much to be borne. A weight was taken off her soul. In the first rush of her joy and thankfulness she burst into tears, and then once more read the letter, though she scarce could distinguish the words for the tears of joy that blinded her eyes.

To go to Naples—and to Hilda! what greater happiness could be conceived of? And that thoughtful Hilda had actually written to Gualtier! And she was alive! And she was in Naples! What a wonder to have her thus come back to her from the dead!

With such a torrent of confused thoughts Zillah's mind was filled, until at length, in her deep gratitude to Heaven, she flung herself upon her knees and poured forth her soul in prayer.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BETRAYED.

ZILLAH'S excitement was so great that, for all that night, she could not sleep. There were many things for her to think about. The idea that Hilda had been so marvelously rescued, and was still alive and waiting for her, filled her mind. But it did not prevent her from dwelling in thought upon the frightful scenes through which she had passed. The thought of her dear friend's lonely voyage, drifting over the seas in an open boat, unprotected from the storm, and suffering from cold, from hunger, and from sorrow till sense left her, was a painful one to her loving heart. Yet the pain of these thoughts did not disturb her. The joy that arose from the consciousness of Hilda's safety was of itself sufficient to counterbalance all else. Her safety was so unexpected, and the one fact was so overwhelming, that the happiness which it caused was sufficient to overmaster any sorrowful sympathy which she might feel for Hilda's misfortunes. So, if her night was sleepless, it was not sad. Rather it was joyful; and often and often, as the hours passed, she repeated that prayer of thankfulness which the first perusal of the letter had caused.

Besides this, the thought of going on to join Hilda was a pleasant one. Her friend had been so thoughtful that she had arranged all for her.

o companion could be more appropriate or ore reliable than Mr. Gualtier, and he would rtainly make his appearance shortly. She ought also of the pleasure of living in Naples, d recalled all that she had ever heard about e charms of that place. Amidst such thoughts these morning came, and it was not until aft- the sun had risen that Zillah fell asleep.

Two days after the receipt of that letter by illah, Gualtier arrived. Although he had been ly a music-teacher, yet he had been associated the memory of Zillah with many happy hours Chetwynde; and his instructions at Pomeroy ourt, though at the time irksome to her, were w remembered pleasantly, since they were con- cted with the memories of her father; and on is occasion he had the additional advantage of ing specially sent by Hilda. He seemed thus her mind to be in some sort connected with ilda. She had not seen him since the Earl's ness, and had understood from Hilda that he d gone to London to practice his profession.

As Gualtier entered, Zillah greeted him with warmth which was unusual from her to him, t which can readily be accounted for under e circumstances. He seemed surprised and eased. His small gray eyes twinkled, and his llow cheeks flushed with involuntary delight at ch marks of condescension. Yet in his man- r and address he was as humble and as servile ever. His story was shortly told. He had re- ived, he said, a short note from Miss Krieff, by ich he learned that, owing to an act of thought- sness on her part, she had gone adrift in a boat, d had been picked up by a ship on its way to ples, to which place she had been carried. He derstood that she had written to Lady Chet- nde to come and join her. Gualtier hoped t Lady Chetwynde would feel the same con- ence in him which Miss Krieff had expressed making known to him that they had been liv- under an assumed name. Of course, unless had been communicated to him it would e been impossible for him to find her. He ured her that with him her secret was per- tly inviolable, that he was perfectly reliable, d that the many favors which he had received m General Pomeroy, from the late Earl, and m herself, would of themselves be sufficient make him guard her secret with watchful gilance, and devote himself to her interests h the utmost zeal and fidelity.

To Zillah, however, the voluble assurances of altier's vigilance, secrecy, and fidelity were te unnecessary. It was enough that she had own him for so many years. Her father had t made him known to her. After him her ad father, Earl Chetwynde, had made him teacher. Last of all, at this great hour in life, Hilda herself had sent him to accom- y her. It would have been strange indeed under such circumstances, any doubt what- r with regard to him had for one moment en- ed her mind.

On the day after the receipt of Hilda's letter ah had gone for the first time to the rectory, d told the joyful news to her kind friends re. She read the letter to them, while they ened to every word with breathless interest, n interrupting her with exclamations of pity, ympathy, or of wonder. Most of all were y affected by the change which had come over Zillah, who in one night had passed from dull despair to life and joy and hope. She seemed to them now a different being. Her face was flushed with excitement; her deep, dark eyes, no longer downcast, flashed with radiant joy; her voice was tremulous as she read the letter, or spoke of her hope of soon rejoining Hilda. These dear old people looked at her till their eyes filled with tears; tears which were half of joy over her happiness, and half of sadness at the thought that she was to leave them.

"Ah, my child," said Mrs. Harvey, in a tremulous voice, "how glad I am that your dear sister has been saved by our merciful God; but how sad I feel to think that I shall lose you now, when I have come to love you so!"

Her voice had such inexpressible sadness, and such deep and true affection in its tones, that Zillah was touched to the heart. She twined her arms fondly about the neck of the old lady, and kissed her tenderly.

"Ah, my dearest Mrs. Harvey," said she, "how can I ever repay you for all your loving care of me! Do not think that I did not see all and feel all that you did for me. But I was *so* sad."

"But, my poor child," said the rector, after a long conversation, in which they had exhausted all the possibilities of Hilda's "situation," "this is a long journey. Who is this Mr. Gualtier? Do you know him? Would it not be better for me to go with you?"

"Oh, my kind friend, how good you are!" said Zillah, again overwhelmed with gratitude. "But there is no necessity. I have known Mr. Gualtier for years. He was my music-teacher for a long time before my dear father left me. He is very good and very faithful."

So no more was said on that matter.

Before Gualtier came Zillah had arranged every thing for her journey. She decided to leave the house just as it was, under the care of the housekeeper, with the expectation of returning at no very distant date. The rector promised to exercise a general supervision over her affairs. She left with him money enough to pay the year's rent in advance, which he was to transmit to the owner. Such arrangements as these gave great comfort to these kindly souls, for in them they saw signs that Zillah would return; and they both hoped that the "sisters" would soon tire even of Italy, and in a fit of homesickness come back again. With this hope they bade her adieu.

On leaving Tenby, Zillah felt nothing but delight. As the coach drove her to the station, as the railway train hurried her to London, as the tidal train took her to Southampton, as the packet bore her across the Channel, every moment of the time was filled with joyous anticipations of her meeting Hilda. All her griefs over other losses and other calamities in one instant faded away at the news that Hilda was safe. That one thing was enough to compensate for all else.

Arriving at Paris, she was compelled to wait for one day on account of some want of connection in the trains for Marseilles. Gualtier acted as cicerone, and accompanied her over Carriage through the chief streets, through the Place de la Concorde, the Champs Elysées, and the Bois de Boulogne. She was sufficiently herself to ex-

perience delight in spite of her impatience, and to feel the wonder and admiration which the first sight of that gay and splendid capital always excites. But she was not willing to linger here. Naples was the goal at which she wished to arrive, and as soon as possible she hurried onward.

On reaching Marseilles she found the city crowded. The great movements of the Italian war were going on, and every thing was affected by it. Marseilles was one of the grand centres of action, and one of the chief depôts for military supplies. The city was filled with soldiers. The harbor was full of transports. The streets were thronged with representatives of all the different regiments of the French army, from the magnificent steel-clad Cuirassiers, and the dashing Chasseurs de Vincennes, to the insouciant Zouaves and the wild Turcos. In addition to the military, the city was filled with civil officials, connected with the dispatch of the army, who filled the city, and rendered it extremely difficult for a stranger to find lodgings.

Zillah was taken to the Hôtel de France, but it was full. Gualtier went round to all the other hotels, but returned with the unpleasant intelligence that all were [illegible]e filled. But this did not very greatly [illegible]illah, for she hoped to be on board the [illegible]oon, and whether she found lodgings [illegible] a matter of indifference to her [illegible] with prosecuting her journey. After [illegible] hours Gualtier returned once more, with the [illegible]rmation that he had succeeded in finding rooms for her in this hotel. He had made an earnest appeal, he said, to the gallantry of some French officers, and they had given up their rooms for the use of the fair Anglaise. It was thus that Zillah was able to secure accommodation for the night.

All that evening Gualtier spent in searching for the Naples steamer. When he made his appearance on the following morning it was with news that was very unpleasant to Zillah. He informed her that the regular steamers did not run, that they had been taken up by the French government as transports for the troops, and, as far as he could learn, there were no provisions whatever for carrying the mails. He could scarcely think it possible that such should be the case, but so it was.

At this intelligence Zillah was aghast.

"No mail steamers?" said she. "Impossible! Even if they had taken up all of them for transports, something would be put on the route."

"I can assure you, my lady, that it is as I said. I have searched every where, and can not find out any thing," said Gualtier.

"You need not address me by my title," said Zillah. "At present I do not choose to adopt it."

"Pardon me," said Gualtier, humbly. "It is taken for granted in France that every wealthy English lady is titled—every French hotel-keeper will call you 'miladi,' and why should not I? It is only a form."

"Well," said Zillah, "let it pass. But what am I to do here? I must go on. Can I not go by land?"

"You forget, my lady, the war in Lombardy."

"But I tell you, I *must* go on," said Zillah, impatiently. "Cost what it may—even if I have to buy a steamer."

Gualtier smiled faintly.

"Even if you wished to buy a steamer, my lady, you could not. The French government has taken up all for transports. Could you not make up your mind to wait for a few days?"

"A few days!" cried Zillah, in tones of despair—"a few days! What! after hurrying here through France so rapidly! A few days! No. I would rather go to Spain, and catch the steamer at Gibraltar that Miss Krieff spoke of."

Gualtier smiled.

"That would take much longer time," said he. "But, my lady, I will go out again, and see if I can not find some way more expeditious than that. Trust to me. It will be strange if I do not find some way. Would you be willing to go in a sailing vessel?"

"Of course," said Zillah, without hesitation. "If nothing else can be found I shall be only too happy."

Upon this, Gualtier departed with the intention of searching for a sailing vessel. Zillah herself would have been willing to go in any thing. Such was her anxiety to get to Hilda, that rather than stay in Marseilles she would have been willing to start for Naples in an open boat. But on mentioning her situation to Mathilde she encountered, to her surprise, a very energetic opposition. That important personage expressed a very strong repugnance to any thing of the kind. First, she dreaded a sea voyage in a sailing vessel; and secondly, having got back to France, she did not wish to leave it. If the regular mail vessel had been going she might not have objected, but as it was she did not wish to go. Mathilde was very voluble, and very determined; but Zillah troubled herself very little about this. To get to Hilda was her one and only desire. If Mathilde stood in the way she would go on in spite of her. She was willing to let Mathilde go, and set out unattended. To get to Naples, to join Hilda, whether in a steamer or a sailing vessel—whether with a maid or without one—that was her only purpose.

On the following morning Gualtier made his appearance, with the announcement that he had found a vessel. It was a small schooner which had been a yacht belonging to an Englishman, who had sold it at Marseilles for some reason or other to a merchant of the city. This merchant was willing to sell it, and Gualtier had bought it in her name, as he could find no other way of going on. The price was large, but "my lady" had said that she was willing to buy a steamer, and to her it would be small. He had ventured, therefore, to conclude the bargain. He had done more, and had even engaged a crew, so that all was in readiness to start.

At this news Zillah was overjoyed. Her longing to be with Hilda was so great that even if she had been a miser she would have willingly paid the price demanded, and far more. The funds which she had brought with her, and which Gualtier had kindly taken charge of, amounted to a considerable sum, and afforded ample means for the purchase of the vessel. The vessel was therefore regularly purchased, and Zillah at last saw a way by which she could once more proceed on her journey. Gualtier informed her that the remainder of that day would be needed for the completion of the preparations, and that they would be ready to leave at an early hour

on the following morning. So Zillah awaited with impatience the appointed time.

Zillah awaked early on the following morning, but Mathilde was not to be found. Instead of Mathilde, a letter was awaiting her, which stated, in very respectful language, that the dread which that personage felt at going in a sailing vessel was so strong, and her love for her own dear country so great, that she had decided to remain where she was. She therefore had come to the conclusion to leave "miladi" without giving warning, although she would thereby lose what was due her, and she hoped that "miladi" would forgive her, and bear her in affectionate remembrance. With wishes and prayers for "miladi's" future happiness, Mathilde begged leave to subscribe herself "miladi's" most devoted and grateful servant.

Such was the final message of Mathilde to her indulgent mistress. But, although at any other time Zillah would have been both wounded and indignant at such desertion of her at such a time, yet now, in the one engrossing thought that filled her mind, she thought but little of this incident. At Naples, she thought, she could very easily fill her place. Now she would have to be without a maid for two or three days, but after all it would make no very great difference. She could rely upon herself, and endure a few days' discomfort very readily for Hilda's sake. It was with such feelings as these that she awaited the arrival of Gualtier. When he came, and heard of the departure of Mathilde, he appeared to be filled with indignation, and urged Zillah to wait one day more till he could get another maid for her. But Zillah refused. She was determined to go on, and insisted on starting at once for the yacht. Finding his remonstrances unavailing, the faithful Gualtier conducted her to the schooner, and, as all things were in readiness, they put out to sea immediately.

The schooner was a very handsome one, and on looking over it Zillah felt delighted with Gualtier's good taste, or his good fortune, whichever it might have been. It was, as has been said, a yacht, which had been the property of an Englishman who had sold it at Marseilles. The cabin was fitted up in the most elegant style, and was much more roomy than was common in vessels of that size. There was an outer cabin with a table in the middle and sofas on either side, and an inner cabin with capacious berths. The watchful attention of Gualtier was visible all around. There were baskets of rare fruits, boxes of bonbons, and cake-baskets filled with delicate macaroons and ratafias. There were also several books—volumes of the works of Lamartine and Chateaubriand, together with two or three of the latest English novels. He certainly had been particular to the last degree in attending to all of her possible wants.

After inspecting the arrangements of the cabin, Zillah went out on deck and seated herself at the stern, from which she watched the city which they were fast leaving behind them. On casting a casual glance around, it struck her for a moment that the crew were a remarkably ill-looking set of men; but she was utterly inexperienced, and she concluded that they were like all sailors, and should not be judged by the same standard as landsmen. Besides, was not her faithful Gualtier there, whose delicate attention was so evident even in the most minute circumstance which she had noticed? If the thought of the evil looks of the crew came to her, it was but for a moment; and in a moment it was dismissed. She was herself too guileless to be suspicious, and was far more ready to cast from her all evil thoughts than to entertain them. In her innocence and inexperience she was bold, when one more brave but more experienced would have been fearful.

The wind was fair, and the yacht glided swiftly out of the harbor. The sea was smooth, and Zillah could look all around her upon the glorious scene. In a few hours they had left the land far behind them, and then the grander features of the distant coast became more plainly visible. The lofty heights rose up above the sea receding backward, but ever rising higher, till they reached the Alpine summits of the inland. All around was the blue Mediterranean, dotted with white sails. All that she saw was novel and striking; she had never sailed in a yacht before; the water was smooth enough to be pleasant, and she gave herself up to a childlike joy.

On rising on the following morning they were far out of sight of land. A delicious repast was placed before her for her breakfast. After partaking she sat on deck, looking out upon the glorious sea, with such a feeling of dreamy enjoyment as she had scarcely ever known before. Her one chief thought was that every hour was bringing her nearer to Hilda. When tired of the deck she went below, and lay down in her cabin and read. So the hours passed. On that day Gualtier surpassed himself in delicate attention to every possible wish of hers. She herself was surprised at the variety of the dishes which composed her dinner. She could not help expressing her thanks.

Gualtier smiled, and murmured some scarce audible words.

Two days passed, and they were now far on their way. Gualtier assured her respectfully that on the following morning they would see the Apennines on the Italian shore. The voyage had not been so rapid as it might have been, but it had been exceedingly pleasant weather, and their progress had been satisfactory. That evening Zillah watched the sun as it set in glory below the watery horizon, and retired for the night with the thought that in two days more she would be with Hilda.

She slept soundly that night.

Suddenly she waked with a strange sensation. Her dreams had been troubled. She thought that she was drowning. In an agony she started up. Water was all around her in the berth where she was lying. The dim light of dawn was struggling through the sky-light, and she looked around bewildered, not knowing at first where she was. Soon, however, she remembered, and then a great horror came over her. *The vessel was sinking!*

All was still. She gave a wild cry, and started up, wading through the water to the door. She cried again and again, till her cries became shrieks. In vain. No answer came. Flinging a shawl around her she went into the outer cabin, and thence ascended to the deck.

No one was there.

No man was at the wheel. No watchers were visible. The vessel was deserted!

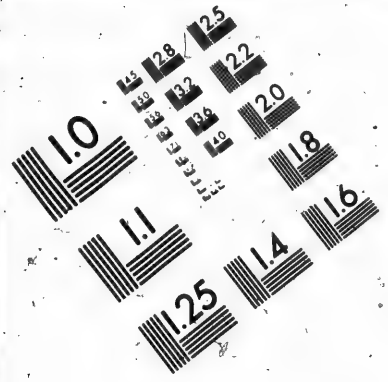
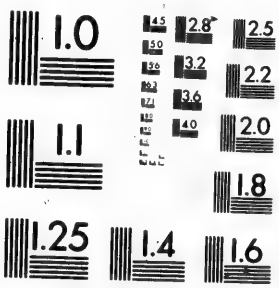
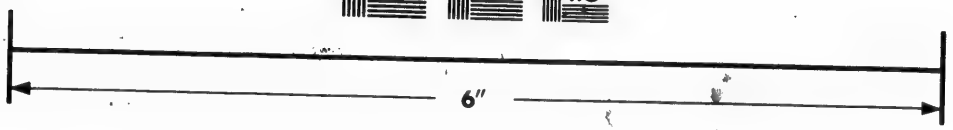
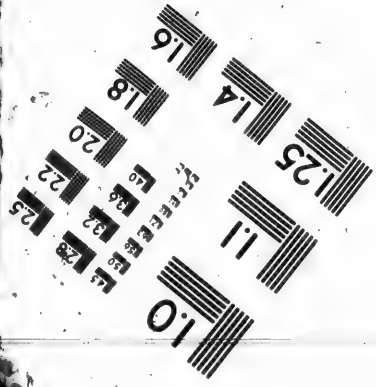
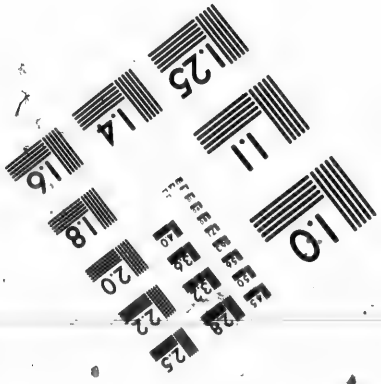


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)









Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

"AN AWFUL FEAR CAME OVER HER."

Louder and louder she shrieked. Her voice, borne afar over the wide waste of waters, died out in the distance, but brought no response. She hurried to the forecastle. The door was open. She called over and over again. There was no reply. Looking down in the dim morning twilight she could see plainly that the water had penetrated there.

An awful fear came over her.

The sails were lowered. The boat was gone. No one was on board besides herself. The schooner was sinking. She had been deserted. She had been betrayed. She would never see Hilda. Who had betrayed her? Was Hilda really at Naples? Had she really written that letter and sent Gualtier to her? A thousand horrid suspicions rushed through her mind. One thought predominated—*she had been betrayed!*

But why?

CHAPTER XXIX.

TWO NEW CHARACTERS.

In spite of Gualtier's assurances, a steamer was running regularly between Naples and Marseilles, and the war had made no disturbance in the promptitude and dispatch of its trips. It belonged to a line whose ships went on to Malta, touching at Italian ports, and finally connecting

with the steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company. The day after Zillah had left Marseilles one of these left Naples on its way to the former port, having on board the usual number and variety of passengers.

On the stern of this vessel stood two men, looking out over the water to where the purple Apennines arose over the Italian coast, where the grand figure of Vesuvius towered conspicuous, its smoke cloud floating like a pennon in the air. One of these men was tall, broad-shouldered, sinewy, with strong square head, massive forehead, firm chin, and eyes which held in their expression at once gentleness and determination; no very rare compound in the opinion of some, for there are those who think that the strongest and boldest natures are frequently the tenderest. He was a man of about fifty, or perhaps even sixty, but his years sat lightly on him; and he looked like a man whom any one might reasonably dread to meet with in a personal encounter. The other was much younger. His face was bronzed by exposure to a southern sun; he wore a heavy beard and mustache, and he had the unmistakable aspect of an English gentleman, while the marked military air which was about him showed that he was without doubt a British officer. He was dressed, however, as a civilian. His hat showed that he was in mourning; and a general sadness of demeanor which he manifested was well in keeping with that sombre emblem.

"Well, Windham," said the former, after a long silence, "I never thought that there was a place on this green earth that could take hold of me like that Italian city. I don't believe that there is a city any where that comes up to Naples. Even New York is not its equal. I wouldn't leave it now—no, *Sir!*—ten team of horses couldn't drag me away, only my family are waiting for me at Marseilles, you see—and I must join them. However, I'll go back again as soon as I can; and if I don't stay in that there country till I've exhausted it—squeezed it, and pressed out of it all the useful and entertaining information that it can give—why, then, my name's not Obed Chute."

The one called Windham gave a short laugh.

"You'll have a little difficulty in Lombardy, I think," said he.

"Why?"

"The war."

"The war? My friend, are you not aware that the war need not be any obstacle to a free American?"

"Perhaps not; but you know that armies in the field are not very much inclined to be respecters of persons, and the freest of free Americans might find himself in an Austrian or a French prison as a spy."

"Even so; but he would soon get out, and have an interesting reminiscence. That is one of the things that he would have to be prepared for. At any rate, I have made up my mind to go to Lombardy, and I'll take my family with me. I should dearly like to get a Concord coach to do it in, but if I can't I'll get the nearest approach to it I can find, and calmly trot on in the rear of the army. Perhaps I'll have a chance to take part in some engagement. I should like to do so, for the honor of the flag if nothing else."

"You remind me of your celebrated countryman, who was, as he said, 'blue moulded for want of a fight.'"

"That man, Sir, was a true representative American, and a type of our ordinary, everyday, active, vi-vacious Western citizen—the class of men that fell the forests, people the prairies, fight the fever, reclaim the swamps, tunnel the mountains, send railroads over the plains, and dam all the rivers on the broad continent. It's a pity that these Italians hadn't an army of these Western American men to lead them in their struggle for liberty."

"Do you think they would be better than the French army?"

"The French army!" exclaimed Obed Chute, in indescribable accents.

"Yes. It is generally conceded that the French army takes the lead in military matters. I say so, although I am a British officer."

"Have you ever traveled in the States?" said Obed Chute, quietly.

"No. I have not yet had that pleasure."

"You have never yet seen our Western population. You don't know it, and you can't conceive it. Can you imagine the original English Puritan turned into a wild Indian, with all his original honor, and morality, and civilization, combining itself with the intense animalism, the capacity for endurance, and the reckless valor of the savage? Surround all this with all that tenderness, domesticity, and pluck which are the ineradicable characteristics of the Saxon race, and then you have the Western American man—the product of the Saxon, developed by long struggles with savages and by the animating influences of a boundless continent."

"I suppose by this you mean that the English race in America is superior to the original stock."

"That can hardly be doubted," said Obed Chute, quite seriously. "The mother country is small and limited in its resources. America is not a country. It is a continent, over which our race has spread itself. The race in the mother country has reached its ultimate possibility. In America it is only beginning its new career. To compare America with England is not fair. You should compare New York, New England, Virginia, with England, not America. Already we show differences in the development of the same race which only a continent could cause. Maine is as different from South Carolina as England from Spain. But you Europeans never seem able to get over a fashion that you have of regarding our boundless continent as a small country. Why, I myself have been asked by Europeans about the health of friends of theirs who lived in California, and whom I knew no more about than I did of the Chinese. The fact is, however, that we are continental, and nature is developing the continental American man to an astonishing extent.

"Now as to this Lombard war," continued Obed Chute, as Windham stood listening in silence, and with a quiet smile that relieved but slightly the deep melancholy of his face—"as to this Lombard war; why, Sir, if it were possible to collect an army of Western Americans and put them into that there territory"—waving his hand grandly toward the Apennines—"the way they would walk the Austrians off to their own country would be a caution. For the Western American man, as an individual, is physically and

spiritually a *gigantic* being, and an army of such would be irresistible. Two weeks would wind up the Lombard war. Our Americans, Sir, are the most military people in the wide universe."

"As yet, though, they haven't done much to show their capacity," said Windham. "You don't call the Revolutionary war and that of 1812 any greater than ordinary wars, do you?"

"No, Sir; not at all," said Obed Chute. "We are well aware that in actual wars we have as yet done but little in comparison with our possibilities and capabilities. In the Revolutionary war, Sir, we were crude and unformed—we were infants, Sir, and our efforts were infantile. The swaddling bands of the colonial system had all along restrained the free play of the national muscle; and throughout the war there was not time for full development. Still, Sir, from that point of view, as an infant nation, we did remarkable well—re-markable. In 1812 we did not have a fair chance. We had got out of infancy, it is true; but still not into our full manhood. Besides, the war was too short. Just as we began to get into condition—just as our fleets and armies were ready to *do* something—the war came to an end. Even then, however, we did re-markable well—re-markable. But, after all, neither of these exhibited the American man in his boundless possibility before the world."

"You think, I suppose, that if a war were to come now, you could do proportionally better."

"Think it!" said Obed; "I know it. The American people know it. And they want, above all things, to have a chance to show it. You spoke of that American who was blue moulded for want of a fight. I said that man was a typical American. Sir, that saying is profoundly true. Sir, the whole American nation is blue-moulded, Sir. It is spilin for want of a fight—a big fight."

"Well, and what do you intend to do about it?"

"Time will show," said Obed, gravely. "Already, any one acquainted with the manners of our people and the conduct of our government will recognize the remarkable fact that our nation is the most wrathy, cantankerous, high-mettled community on this green earth. Why, Sir, there ain't a foreign nation that can keep on friendly terms with us. It ain't ugliness, either—it's only a friendly desire to have a fight with somebody—we only want an excuse to begin. The only trouble is, there ain't a nation that reciprocates our pecooliar national feeling."

"What can you do, then?" asked Windham, who seemed to grow quite amused at this conversation.

"That's a thing I've often puzzled over," said Obed, thoughtfully; "and I can see only one remedy for us."

"And what is that?"

"Well, it's a hard one—but I suppose it's got to come. You see, the only foreign countries that are near enough to us to afford a satisfactory field of operations are Mexico and British America. The first we have already tried. It was poor work, though. Our armies marched through Mexico as though they were going on a picnic. As to British America, there is no chance. The population is too small. No, there is only one way to gratify the national craving for a fight."

"I don't see it."

"Why," said Obed, dryly, "to get up a big fight among ourselves."

"Among yourselves?"

"Yes—quite domestic—and all by ourselves."

"You seem to me to speak of a civil war."

"That's the identical circumstance, and nothing else. It is the only thing that is suited to the national feeling; and what's more—it's got to come. I see the pointings of the finger of Providence. It's got to come—there's no help for it—and, mark me, when it does come it 'll be the tallest kind of fightin' that this revolving orb has yet seen in all its revolutions."

"You speak very lightly about so terrible a thing as a civil war," said Windham. "But do you think it possible? In so peaceful and well-ordered a country what causes could there be?"

"When the whole nation is pining and craving and spilin for a fight," said Obed, "causes will not be wanting. I can enumerate half a dozen now. First, there is the slavery question; secondly, the tariff question; thirdly, the suffrage question; fourthly, the question of the naturalization of foreigners; fifthly, the bank question; sixthly, the question of denominational schools."

Windham gave a short laugh.

"You certainly seem to have causes enough for a war, although, to my contracted European mind, they would all seem insufficient. Which of these, do you think, is most likely to be the cause of that civil war which you anticipate?"

"One, pre-eminently and inevitably," said Obed, solemnly. "All others are idle beside this one." He dropped abruptly the half gasconading manner in which he [redacted] indulging, and, in a low voice, added: "In real earnest, Windham, there is one [redacted] in America which is, every year, every month, every day, forcing on a war from which there can be no escape; a war which will convulse the republic and endanger its existence; yes, Sir, a war which will deluge the land with blood from one end to the other."

His solemn tone, his change of manner, and his intense earnestness, impressed Windham most deeply. He felt that there was some deep meaning in the language of Obed Chute, and that under his careless words there was a gloomy foreboding of some future calamity to his loved country.

"This is a fearful prospect," said he, "to one who loves his country. What is it that you fear?"

"One thing," said Obed—"one thing, and one only—slavery! It is this that has divided the republic and made of our country two nations, which already stand apart, but are every day drawing nearer to that time when a frightful struggle for the mastery will be inevitable. The South and the North must end their differences by a fight; and that fight will be the greatest that has been seen for some generations. There is no help for it. It must come. There are many in our country who are trying to postpone the evil day, but it is to no purpose. The time will come when it can be postponed no longer. Then the war must come, and it will be the slave States against the free."

"I never before heard an American acknowledge the possibility of such a thing," said Windham, "though in Europe there are many who have anticipated this."

"Many Americans feel it and fear it," said Obed, with unchanged solemnity; "but they do not dare to put their feelings or their fears in words. One may fear that his father, his mother, his wife, or his child, may die; but to put such a fear in words is heart-breaking. So we, who have this fear, brood over it in secret, and in every shifting scene of our national life we look fearfully for those coming events which cast their shadows before. The events which we watch with the deepest anxiety are the Presidential elections. Every four years now brings a crisis; and in one of these the long antagonism between North and South will end in war. But I hate to speak of this. What were we talking of? Of Lombardy and the Italian war. What do you think," he added, abruptly changing the conversation, "of my plan to visit the seat of war?"

"I think," said Windham, "that if any man is able to *do* Lombardy at such a time, you are that person."

"Well, I intend to try," said Obed Chute, modestly. "I *may* fail, though I generally succeed in what I set my mind on. I'll go, I think, as a fighting neutral."

"Prepared to fight on either side, I suppose."

"Yes; as long as I don't have to fight against Garibaldi."

"But, wouldn't you find your family a little embarrassing in case of a fight?"

"Oh no! they would always be safely in the rear, at the base of my line of operations. There will be no difficulty about it whatever. Americans are welcome all over Italy, especially at this time, for these Italians think that America sympathizes with them, and will help them; and as to the French—why, Boney, though an emperor, is still a democrat to his heart's core, and, I have no doubt, would give a warm reception to a fighting volunteer."

"Have you any acquaintance with any of the French generals, or have you any plan for getting access to Napoleon?"

"Oh no! I trust merely to the reason and good feeling of the man. It seems to me that a request from a free American to take part in a fight could hardly meet with any thing else except the most cordial compliance."

"Well, all I can say is, that if I were Louis Napoleon, I would put you on my staff," said Windham.

The name of Obed Chute has already been brought forward. He had embarked at Bombay on board the same steamer with Windham, and they had formed a friendship which after circumstances had increased. At first Windham's reserve had repelled advances; his sadness and preoccupation had repelled any intimacy; but before many days an event happened which threw them into close association. When about half-way on her voyage the steamer was discovered to be on fire. Panic arose. The captain tried to keep order among the sailors. This he was very easily able to do. But with the passengers it was another thing. Confusion prevailed every where, and the sailors themselves were becoming demoralized by the terror which raged among the others. In that moment of danger two men stood forth from among the passengers, who, by the force of their own strong souls, brought order out of that chaos. One of these was Obed Chute. With a revolver in his hand he went about laying hold of each man who seemed to be most agitated, swearing that he would blow his brains out if he didn't "stop his infernal noise." The other was Windham, who acted in a different manner. He collected pipes, pumps, and buckets, and induced a large number to take part in the work of extinguishing the flames. By the attitude of the two the rest were either calmed or cowed; and each one recognized in the other a kindred spirit.

After landing at Suez they were thrown more closely together; their intimacy deepened on the way to Alexandria; and when they embarked on the Mediterranean they had become stronger friends than ever. Windham had told the other that he had recently heard of the death of a friend, and was going home to settle his affairs. He hinted also that he was in some government employ in India; and Obed Chute did not seek to know more. Contrary to the generally received view of the Yankee character, he did not show any curiosity whatever, but received the slight information which was given with a delicacy which showed no desire to learn more than Windham himself might choose to tell.

But for his own part he was as frank and communicative as though Windham had been an old friend or a blood relation. He had been kept in New York too closely, he said, for the last twenty years, and now wished to have a little breathing space and elbow-room. So he had left New York for San Francisco, partly on pleasure, partly on business. He spent some months in California, and then crossed the Pacific to China, touching at Honolulu and Nangasaki. He had left directions for his family to be sent on to Europe, and meet him at a certain time at Marseilles. He was expecting to find them there. He himself had gone from China to India, where he had taken a small tour though the country, and then had embarked for Europe. Before going back to America he expected to spend some time with his family in Italy, France, and Germany.

There was a grandeur of view in this man's way of looking upon the world which surprised Windham, and, to some degree, amused him. For Obed Chute regarded the whole world exactly as another man might regard his native county or town; and spoke about going from San Francisco to Hong-Kong, touching at Nangasaki, just as another might speak of going from Liverpool to Glasgow, touching at Rothsay. He seemed, in fact, to regard our planet as rather a small affair, easily traversed, and a place with which he was thoroughly familiar. He had written from San Francisco for his family to meet him at Marseilles, and now approached that place with the fullest confidence that his family would be there according to appointment. This type of man is entirely and exclusively the product of America, the country of magnificent distances, and the place where Nature works on so grand a scale that human beings insensibly catch her style of expression. Obed Chute was a man who felt in every fibre the oppressive weight of his country's grandeur. Yet so generous was his nature that he forbore to overpower others by any allusions to that grandeur, except where it was absolutely impossible to avoid it.

These two had gradually come to form a strong regard for one another, and Obed Chute did

not hesitate to express his opinion about his friend.

"I do not generally take to Britishers," said he, once, "for they are too contracted, and never seem to me to have taken in a full breath of the free air of the universe. They seem usually to have been in the habit of inhaling an enervating moral and intellectual atmosphere. But you suit me, you do. Young man, your hand."

And grasping Windham's hand, Obed wrung it so heartily that he forced nearly all feeling out of it.

"I suppose living in India has enabled me to breathe a broader moral atmosphere," said Windham, with his usual melancholy smile.

"I suppose so," said Obed Chute. "Something has done it, any how. You showed it when the steamer was burning."

"How?"

"By your eye."

"Why, what effect can one's moral atmosphere have on one's eyes?"

"An enormous effect," said Obed Chute. "It's the same in morals as in nature. The Fellahs of the Nile, exposed as they are to the action of the hot rays of the sun, as they strike on the sand, are universally troubled with ophthalmia. In our Mammoth Cave, in Kentucky, there is a subterranean lake containing fishes which have no eyes at all. So it is in character and in morals. I will point you out men whose eyes are inflamed by the hot rays of passion; and others who show by their eyes that they have lived in moral darkness as dense as that of the Kentucky cave. Take a thief. Do you not know him by his eye? It takes an honest man to look you in the face."

"You have done a great many things," said Windham, at another time. "Have you ever preached in your country?"

"No," said Obed Chute, with a laugh; "but I've done better—I've been a stump orator; and stump oratory, as it is practiced in America, is a little the tallest kind of preaching that this green earth" (he was fond of that expression) "has ever listened to. Our orb, Sir, has seen strange experiences; but it is getting rayther astonished at the performances of the American man."

"Generally," said Windham, "I do not believe in preaching so much as in practice; but when I see a man like you who can do both, I'm willing to listen, even if it be a stump speech that I hear. Still, I think that you are decidedly greater with a revolver in the midst of a crowd than you could be on a stump with a crowd before you."

Obed Chute shook his head solemnly.

"There," said he, "is one of the pecooliarities of you Europeans. You don't understand our national ways and manners. We don't separate saying and doing. With us every man who pretends to speak must be able to act. No man is listened to unless he is known to be capable of knocking down any one who interrupts him. In a country like ours speaking and acting go together. The Stump and the Revolver are two great American forces—twin born—the animating power of the Great Republic. There's no help for it. It must be so. Why, if I give offense in a speech, I shall of course be called to account afterward; and if I can't take care of myself and settle the account—why—where am I? Don't you see? Ours, Sir, is a singular state of society; but it is the last development of the human race, and, of course, the best."

Conversations like these diverted Windham and roused him from his brooding melancholy. Obed Chute's fancies were certainly whimsical; he had an odd love for paradox and extravagance; he seized the idea that happened to suggest itself, and followed it out with a dry gravity and a solemn air of earnestness which made all that he said seem like his profound conviction. Thus in these conversations Windham never failed to receive entertainment, and to be roused from his preoccupying cares.

CHAPTER XXX.

PICKED UP ADRIFT.

Two days passed since the steamer left Naples, and they were now far on their way. On the morning of the third Windham came on deck at an early hour. No one was up. The man at the wheel was the only one visible. Windham looked around upon the glorious scene which the wide sea unfolds at such a time. The sun had not yet risen, but all the eastern sky was tinged with red; and the wide waste of

waters between the ship and that eastern horizon was colored with the ruddy hues which the sky cast downward. But it was not this scene, magnificent though it was, which attracted the thoughts of Windham as he stood on the quarter-deck. His face was turned in that direction; but it was with an abstracted gaze which took in nothing of the glories of visible nature. That deep-seated melancholy of his, which was always visible in his face and manner, was never more visible than now. He stood by the taffrail in a dejected attitude and with a dejected face—brooding over his own secret cares, finding nothing in this but fresh anxieties, and yet unable to turn his thoughts to any thing else. The steamer sped through the waters, the rumble of her machinery was in the air, the early hour made the solitude more complete. This man, whoever he was, did not look as though he were going to England on any joyous errand, but rather like one who was going home to the performance of some mournful duty which was never absent from his thoughts.

Standing thus with his eyes wandering abstractedly over the water, he became aware of an object upon its surface, which attracted his attention and roused him from his meditations. It struck him as very singular. It was at some considerable distance off, and the steamer was rapidly passing it. It was not yet sufficiently light to distinguish it well, but he took the ship's glass and looked carefully at it. He could now distinguish it more plainly. It was a schooner with its sails down, which by its general position seemed to be drifting. It was very low in the water, as though it were either very heavily laden or else water-logged. But there was one thing there which drew all his thoughts. By the foremast, as he looked, he saw a figure standing, which was distinctly waving something as if to attract the attention of the passing steamer. The figure looked like a woman. A longer glance convinced him that it was so in very deed, and that this lonely figure was some woman in distress. It seemed to appeal to himself and to himself alone, with that mute yet eloquent signal, and those despairing gestures. A strange pang shot through his heart—a pang sharp and unaccountable—something more than that which might be caused by any common scene of misery; it was a pang of deep pity and profound sympathy with this lonely sufferer, from whom the steamer's course was turned away, and whom the steersman had not regarded. He only had seen the sight, and the woman seemed to call to him out of her despair. The deep sea lay between; her presence was a mystery; but there seemed a sort of connection between him and her as though invisible yet resistless Fate had shown them to one another, and brought him here to help and to save. It needed but an instant for all these thoughts to flash through his mind. In an instant he flew below and roused the captain, to whom in a few hurried words he explained what had occurred.

The captain, who was dressed, hurried up and looked for himself. But by this time the steamer had moved away much further, and the captain could not see very distinctly any thing more than the outline of a boat.

"Oh, it's only a fishing-boat," said he, with an air of indifference.

"Fishing-boat! I tell you it is an English yacht," said Windham, fiercely. "I saw it plainly. The sails were down. It was water-logged. A woman was standing by the foremast."

The captain looked annoyed.

"It looks to me," said he, "simply like some heavily laden schooner."

"But I tell you she is sinking, and there is a woman on board," said Windham, more vehemently than ever.

"Oh, it's only some Neapolitan fish-wife."

"You must turn the steamer, and save her," said Windham, with savage emphasis.

"I can not. We shall be behind time."

"Damn time!" roared Windham, thoroughly roused. "Do you talk of time in comparison with the life of a human being? If you don't turn the steamer's head, *I* will."

"You!" cried the captain, angrily. "Damn it! if it comes to that, I'd like to see you try it. It's mutiny."

Windham's face grew white with suppressed indignation.

"Turn the steamer's head," said he, in stern cold tones, from which every trace of passion had vanished. "If you don't, I'll do it myself. If you interfere, I'll blow your brains out. As it is, you'll rue the day you ever refused. Do you know who I am?"

He stepped forward, and whispered in the captain's ear some words which sent a look of awe or fear into the captain's face. Whether Windham was the president of the company, or some British embassador, or one of the Lords of the Admiralty, or any one else in high authority, need not be disclosed here. Enough to say that the captain hurried aft, and instantly the steamer's head was turned.

As for Windham, he took no further notice of the captain, but all his attention was absorbed by the boat. It seemed water-logged, yet still it was certainly not sinking, for as the steamer drew nearer, the light had increased, and he could see plainly through the glass that the boat was still about the same distance out of the water.

Meanwhile Obed Chute made his appearance, and Windham, catching sight of him, briefly explained every thing to him. At once all Obed's most generous sympathies were roused. He took the glass, and eagerly scrutinized the vessel. He recognized it at once, as Windham had, to be an English yacht; he saw also that it was water-logged, and he saw the figure at the mast. But the figure was no longer standing erect, or waving hands, or making despairing signals. It had fallen, and lay now crouched in a heap at the foot of the mast. This Windham also saw. He conjectured what the cause of this might be. He thought that this poor creature had kept up her signals while the steamer was passing, until at last it had gone beyond, and seemed to be leaving her. Then hope and strength failed, and she sank down senseless. It was easy to understand all this, and nothing could be conceived of more touching in its mute eloquence than this prostrate figure, whose distant attitudes had told so tragical a story. Now all this excited Windham still more, for he felt more than ever that he was the savior of this woman's life. Fate had sent her across his path—had given her life to him. He only had been the cause why she

should not perish unseen and unknown. This part which he had been called on to play of savior and rescuer—this sudden vision of woe and despair appealing to his mercy for aid—had chased away all customary thoughts, so that now his one idea was to complete his work, and save this poor castaway.

But meanwhile he had not been idle. The captain, who had been so strangely changed by a few words, had called up the sailors, and in an instant the fact was known to the whole ship's company that they were going to save a woman in distress. The gallant fellows, like true sailors, entered into the spirit of the time with the greatest ardor. A boat was got ready to be lowered, Windham jumped in, Chute followed, and half a dozen sailors took the oars. In a short time the steamer had come up to the place. She stopped; the boat was lowered; down went the oars into the water; and away sped the boat toward the schooner. Obed Chute steered. Windham was in the bow, looking eagerly at the schooner, which lay there in the same condition as before. The sun was now just rising, and throwing its radiant beams over the sea. The prostrate figure lay at the foot of the mast.

Rapidly the distance between the boat and the schooner was lessened by the vigorous strokes of the seamen. They themselves felt an interest in the result only less than that of Windham. Nearer and nearer they came. At length the boat touched the schooner, and Windham, who was in the bow, leaped on board. He hurried to the prostrate figure. He stooped down, and with a strange unaccountable tenderness and reverence he took her in his arms and raised her up. Perhaps it was only the reverence which any great calamity may excite toward the one that experiences such calamity; perhaps it was something more profound, more inexplicable—the outgoing of the soul—which may sometimes have a forecast of more than may be indicated to the material senses. This may seem like mysticism, but it is not intended as such. It is merely a statement of the well-known fact that sometimes, under certain circumstances, there arise within us unaccountable presentiments and forebodings, which seem to anticipate the actual future.

Windham then stooped down, and thus tenderly and reverently raised up the figure of the woman. The sun was still rising and gleaming over the waters, and gleaming thus, it threw its full rays into the face of the one whom he held supported in his arms, whose head was thrown back as it lay on his breast, and was upturned so that he could see it plainly.

And never, in all his dreams, had any face appeared before him which bore so rare and radiant a beauty as this one of the mysterious stranger whom he had rescued. The complexion was of a rich olive, and still kept its hue where another would have been changed to the pallor of death; the closed eyes were fringed with long heavy lashes; the eyebrows were thin, and loftily arched; the hair was full of waves and undulations, black as night, gleaming with its jetty gloss in the sun's rays, and in its disorder falling in rich luxuriant masses over the arms and the shoulder of him who supported her. The features were exquisitely beautiful; her nose a slight departure from the Grecian; her lips small and exquisitely shapen; her chin rounded faultlessly. The face was thinner than it might have been, like the face of youth and beauty in the midst of sorrow; but the thinness was not emaciation; it had but refined and spiritualized those matchless outlines, giving to them not the voluptuous beauty of the Greek ideal, but rather the angelic or saintly beauty of the medieval. She was young too, and the bloom and freshness of youth were there beneath all the sorrow and the grief. More than this, the refined grace of that face, the nobility of those features, the stamp of high breeding which was visible in every lineament, showed at once that she could be no common person. This was no fisherman's wife—no peasant girl, but some one of high rank and breeding—some one whose dress proclaimed her station, even if her features had told him nothing.

"My God!" exclaimed Windham, in bewilderment. "Who is she? How came she here? What is the meaning of it?"

But there was no time to be lost in wonder or in vague conjectures. The girl was senseless. It was necessary at once to put her under careful treatment. For a moment Windham lingered, gazing upon that sad and exquisite face; and then raising her in his arms, he went back to the boat. "Give way, lads!" he cried; and the sailors, who saw it all, pulled with a will. They were soon back again. The senseless one was lifted into the steamer. Windham carried her in his own arms to the cabin, and placed her tenderly in a berth, and committed her to the care of the stewardess. Then he waited impatiently for news of her recovery.

Obed Chute, however, insisted on going back to the schooner for the sake of making a general investigation of the vessel. On going on board he found that she was water-logged. She seemed to have been kept afloat either by her cargo, or else by some peculiarity in her construction, which rendered her incapable of sinking. He tore open the hatchway, and pushing an oar down, he saw that there was no cargo, so that it must have been the construction of the vessel which kept her afloat. What that was, he could not then find out. He was compelled, therefore, to leave the question unsettled for the present, and he took refuge in the thought that the one who was rescued might be able to solve the mystery. This allayed for a time his eager curiosity. But he determined to save the schooner, so as to examine it afterward at his leisure. A hasty survey of the cabins, into which he plunged, showed nothing whatever, and so he was compelled to postpone this for the present. But he had a line made fast between the steamer and the schooner, and the latter was thus towed all the way to Marseilles. It showed no signs of sinking, but kept afloat bravely, and reached the port of destination in about the same condition in which it had been first found.

The stewardess treated the stranger with the utmost kindness and the tenderest solicitude, and, at length, the one who had thus been so strangely rescued came out of that senselessness into which she had been thrown by the loss of the hope of rescue. On reviving she told a brief story. She said that she was English, that her name was Lorton, and that she had been traveling to Marseilles in her own yacht. That the day before, on awaking, she found the yacht full

er chin rounded fault-
ier than it might have
ith and beauty in the
inness was not emaci-
nd spiritualized those
them not the voluptu-
al; but rather the an-
e medieval. She was
nd freshness of youth,
sorrow and the grief.
d grace of that face,
es, the stamp of high
in every lineament,
could be no common
man's wife—no peas-
igh rank and breed-
proclaimed her sta-
d told him nothing.
Windham, in bewil-
How came she here?

o be lost in wonder
he girl was senseless.
put her under care-
ment Windham lin-
and exquisite face;
arms, he went back
ads!" he cried; and
pulled with a will.

The senseless one
Windham carried
abin, and placed her
mmitted her to the
en he waited impa-
ery.

isted on going back
of making a general
On going on board
ogged. She seemed
ier by her cargo, or
her construction,
le of sinking. He
nd pushing an oar
s no cargo, so that
uction of the vessel
that was, he could
compelled, there-
settled for the pres-
e thought that the
e able to solve the
time his eager curi-
save the schooner,
at his leisure. A
which he plunged,
d so he was com-
e present. But he
n the steamer and
as thus towed all
owed no signs of
y, and reached the
he same condition
d.

stranger with the
nderest solicitude,
had thus been so
that senselessness
wn by the loss of
ng she told a brief
English, that her
ne had been trav-
yacht. That the
und the yacht full

WINDHAM TENDERLY AND REVERENTLY RAISED [illegible]

of water and abandoned. She had been a day and a night alone in the vessel, without either food or shelter. She had suffered much, and was in extreme prostration, both of mind and body. But her strongest desire was to get to Naples, for her sister was there in ill health, and she had been making the journey to visit her.

Windham and Obed Chute heard this very strange narrative from the stewardess, and talked it over between themselves, considering it in all its bearings. The opinion of each of them was

that there had been foul play somewhere. But then the question arose: why should there have been foul play upon an innocent young girl like this? She was an English lady, evidently of the higher classes; her look was certainly foreign, but her English accent was perfect. In her simple story she seemed to have concealed nothing. The exquisite beauty of the young girl had filled the minds of both of these men with a strong desire to find out the cause of her wrongs, and to avenge her. But how to do so was the difficulty. Windham had important business in England which demanded immediate attention, and would hardly allow him to delay more than a few days. Obed Chute, on the contrary, had plenty of time, but did not feel like trying to intrude himself on her confidence. Yet her distress and desolation had an eloquence which swayed both of these men from their common purposes, and each determined to postpone other designs, and do all that was possible for her.

In spite of an hour's delay in rescuing Miss Lorton, the steamer arrived at Marseilles at nearly the usual time, and the question arose, what was to be done with the one that they had rescued? Windham could do nothing; but Obed Chute could do something, and did do it. The young lady was able now to sit up in the saloon, and here it was that Obed Chute waited upon her.

"Have you any friends in Marseilles?" he asked, in a voice full of kindly sympathy.

"No," said Zillah, in a mournful voice; "none nearer than Naples."

"I have my family here, ma'am," said Obed. "I am an American and a gentleman. If you have no friends, would you feel any objection to stay with us while you are here? My family consists of my sister, two children, and some servants. We are going to Italy as soon as possible, and if you have no objection we can take you there with us—to Naples—to your sister."

Zillah looked up at the large honest face, whose kindly eyes beamed down upon her with parental pity, and she read in that face the expression of a noble and loyal nature.

"You are very—very kind," said she, in a faltering voice. "You will lay me under very great obligations. Yes, Sir, I accept your kind offer. I shall be only too happy to put myself under your protection. I will go with you, and may Heaven bless you!"

She held out her hand toward him. Obed Chute took that little hand in his, but restrained his great strength, and only pressed it lightly.

Meanwhile Windham had come in to congratulate the beautiful girl, whose face had been haunting him ever since that time when the sun lighted it up, as it lay amidst its glory of ebon hair upon his breast. He heard these last words, and stood apart, modestly awaiting some chance to speak.

Zillah raised her face.

Their eyes met in a long earnest gaze.

Zillah was the first to speak.

"You saved me from a fearful fate," she said, in low and tremulous tones. "I heard all about it."

Windham said nothing, but bowed in silence.

Zillah rose from her chair, and advanced toward him, her face expressing strong emotion. Now he saw, for the first time, her wondrous eyes, in all their magnificence of beauty, with their deep unfathomable meaning, and their burning intensity of gaze. On the schooner, while her head lay on his breast, those eyes were closed in senselessness—now they were fixed on his.

"Will you let me thank you, Sir," she said, in a voice which thrilled through him in musical vibrations, "for my *life*, which you snatched from a death of horror? To thank you, is but a cold act. Believe me, you have my everlasting gratitude."

She held out her hand to Windham. He took it in both of his, and reverentially raised it to his lips. A heavy sigh burst from him, and he let it fall.

"Miss Lorton," said he, in his deep musical voice, which now trembled with an agitation to which he was unused, "if I have been the means of saving you from any evil, my own joy is so great that no thanks are needed from you; or, rather, all thankfulness ought to belong to me."

A deep flush overspread Zillah's face. Her large dark eyes for a moment seemed to read his inmost soul. Then she looked down in silence.

As for Windham, he turned away with something like abruptness, and left her with Obed Chute.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PREFECT OF POLICE.

OBED CHUTE had requested his business agents, Messrs. Bourdonnais Frères, to obtain a suitable place for his family on their arrival. He went first to their office, and learned that the family were then in Marseilles, and received their address. He then went immediately for Zillah, and brought her with him. The family consisted of two small girls, aged respectively eight and ten, two maids, a nurse, and a valet or courier, or both combined. A sister of Obed's had the responsibility of the party.

Delight at getting among any friends would have made this party welcome to her; but Miss Chute's thorough respectability made her position entirely unobjectionable. Obed Chute's feelings were not of a demonstrative character. He kissed his sister, took each of his little girls up in his arms, and held them there for about an hour, occasionally walking up and down the room with them, and talking to them all the time. He had brought presents from all parts of the world for every member of his family, and when at length they were displayed, the children made the house ring with their rejoicings. Zillah was soon on a home footing with this little circle. Miss Chute, though rather sharp and very angular, was still thoroughly kind-hearted, and sympathized deeply with the poor waif whom Providence had thrown under her protection. Her kind care and unremitting attention had a favorable effect; and Zillah grew rapidly better, and regained something of that strength which she had lost during the terrors of her late adventure. She was most anxious to go to Naples; but Obed told her that she would have to wait for the next steamer, which would prolong her stay in Marseilles at least a fortnight.

As soon as Obed had seen Zillah fairly settled in the bosom of his family, he set out to give information to the police about the whole mat-

ter. His story was listened to with the deepest attention. Windham, who was present, corroborated it; and finally the thing was considered to be of such importance that the chief of police determined to pay Zillah a visit on the following day, for the sake of finding out the utmost about so mysterious an affair. This official spoke English very well indeed, and had spent all his life in the profession to which he belonged.

Both Obed Chute and Windham were present at the interview which the chief of police had with Zillah, and heard all that she had to say in answer to his many questions. The chief began by assuring her that the case was a grave one, both as affecting her, and also as affecting France, and more particularly Marseilles. He apologized for being forced to ask a great many questions, and hoped that she would understand his motives, and answer freely.

Zillah told her story in very much the same terms that she had told it on board the steamer. Her father had died some years ago, she said. She and her sister had been living together in various parts of England. Their last home was Tenby. She then gave a minute account of the accident which had happened to Hilda, and showed the letter which had been written from Naples. This the chief of police scanned very curiously and closely, examining the envelope, the post-marks, and the stamps.

Zillah then proceeded to give an account of her journey until the arrival at Marseilles. She told him of the confusion which had prevailed, and how the mail steamers had been taken off the route, how Gualtier had found a yacht and purchased it for her, and how Mathilde had deserted her. Then she recounted her voyage up to the time when she had seen the steamer, and had fallen prostrate at the foot of the mast.

"What was the date of your arrival at Marseilles?" asked the chief, after long thought.

Zillah informed him.

"Who is Gualtier?"

"He is a teacher of music and drawing."

"Where does he live?"

"In London."

"Do you know any thing about his antecedents?"

"No."

"Have you known him long?"

"Yes; for five years."

"Has he generally enjoyed your confidence?"

"I never thought much about him, one way or the other. My father found him in London, and brought him to instruct me. Afterward—"

Zillah hesitated. She was thinking of Chetwynde.

"Well—afterward—?"

"Afterward," said Zillah, "that is, after my father's death, he still continued his instructions."

"Did he teach your sister also?"

"Yes."

"Your sister seems to have had great confidence in him, judging from her letter?"

"Yes."

"Did she ever make use of his services before?"

"No."

"Might she not have done so?"

"I don't see how. No occasion ever arose."

"Why, then, did she think him so trustworthy, do you suppose?"

"Why, I suppose because he had been known to us so long, and had been apparently a humble, devoted, and industrious man. We were quite solitary always. We had no friends, and so I suppose she thought of him. It would have been quite as likely, if I were in her situation, that I would have done the same—that is, if I had her cleverness."

"Your sister is clever, then?"

"Very clever indeed. She has always watched over me like a—like a mother," said Zillah, while tears stood in her eyes.

"Ah!" said the chief; and for a time he lost himself in thought.

"How many years is it," he resumed, "since your father died?"

"About five years."

"How long was this Gualtier with you before his death?"

"About six months."

"Did your father ever show any particular confidence in him?"

"No. He merely thought him a good teacher, and conscientious in his work. He never took any particular notice of him."

"What was your father?"

"A landed gentleman."

"Where did he live?"

"Sometimes in Berks, sometimes in London," said Zillah, in general terms. But the chief did not know any thing about English geography, and did not pursue this question any further. It would have resulted in nothing if he had done so, for Zillah was determined, at all hazards, to guard her secret.

"Did you ever notice Gualtier's manner?" continued the chief, after another pause.

"No; I never paid any attention to him, nor ever took any particular notice of any thing about him. He always seemed a quiet and inoffensive kind of a man."

"What do you think of him now?"

"I can scarcely say what. He is a villain, of course; but why, or what he could gain by it, is a mystery."

"Do you remember any thing that you can now recall which in any way looks like villainy?"

"No, not one thing; and that is the trouble with me."

"Did he ever have any quarrel of any kind with any of you?"

"Never."

"Was any thing ever done which he could have taken as an insult or an injury?"

"He was never treated in any other way than with the most scrupulous politeness. My father, my sister, and myself were all incapable of treating him in any other way."

"What was your sister's usual manner toward him?"

"Her manner? Oh, the usual dignified courtesy of a lady to an inferior."

"Did he seem to be a gentleman?"

"A gentleman? Of course not."

"He could not have imagined himself slighted, then, by any humiliation?"

"Certainly not."

"Could Gualtier have had any knowledge of your pecuniary affairs?"

"Possibly—in a general way."

INTERVIEW BETWEEN THE CHIEF OF POLICE AND ZILLAH.

"You are rich, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Might he not have had some design on your money?"

"I have thought of that; but there are insuperable difficulties. There is, first, my sister: and, again, even if she had not escaped, how could he ever get possession of the property?"

The chief did not answer this. He went on to ask his own questions.

"Did you ever hear of the loss of any of your money in any way—by theft, or by forgery?"

"No."

"Did any thing of the kind take place in your father's lifetime?"

"Nothing of the kind whatever."

"Do you know any thing about the antecedents of your maid Mathilde?"

"No; nothing except what little information she may have volunteered. I never had any curiosity about the matter."

"What is her full name?"

"Mathilde Louise Grassier."

"Where does she belong?"

"She said once that she was born in Rouen; and I suppose she was brought up there, too, from her frequent references to that place. I believe she went from there to Paris, as lady's-maid in an English family, and from thence to London."

"How did you happen to get her?"

"My father obtained her for me in London."

"What is her character? Is she cunning?"

"Not as far as I have ever seen. She always struck me as being quite weak out of her own particular department. She was an excellent lady's-maid, but in other respects quite a child."

"Might she not have been very deep, nevertheless?"

"It is possible. I am not much of a judge of character; but, as far as I could see, she was simply a weak, good-natured creature. I don't think she would willingly do wrong; but I think she might be very easily terrified or persuaded. I think her flight from me was the work of Gualtier."

"Did she ever have any thing to do with him?"

"I never saw them together; in fact, whenever he was in the house she was always in my room. I don't see how it is possible that there could have been any understanding between them. For several years she was under my constant supervision, and if any thing of the kind had happened I would certainly recall it now, even if I had not noticed it at the time."

"Did you ever have any trouble with Mathilde?"

"None whatever."

"Weak natures are sometimes vengeful. Did Mathilde ever experience any treatment which might have excited vengeful feelings?"

"She never experienced any thing but kindness."

"Did your sister treat her with the same kindness?"

"Oh yes—quite so."

"When she lived in England did she ever speak about leaving you, and going back to France?"

"No, never."

"She seemed quite contented then?"

"Quite."

"But she left you very suddenly at last. How do you account for that?"

"On the simple grounds that she found herself in her own country, and did not wish to leave it; and then, also, her dread of a sea voyage. But, in addition to this, I think that Gualtier must have worked upon her in some way."

"How? By bribery?"

"I can scarcely think that, for she was better off with me. Her situation was very profitable."

"In what way, then, could he have worked upon her? By menaces?"

"Perhaps so."

"But how? Can you think of any thing in your situation which would, by any possibility, put any one who might be your maid in any danger, or in any fear of some imaginary danger?"

At this question Zillah thought immediately of her assumed name, and the possibility that Gualtier might have reminded Mathilde of this, and terrified her in some way. But she could not explain this; and so she said, unhesitatingly,

"No."

The chief of police was now silent and meditative for some time.

"Your sister," said he at length—"how much older is she than you?"

"About four years."

"You have said that she is clever?"

"She is very clever."

"And that she manages the affairs?"

"Altogether. I know nothing about them. I do not even know the amount of my income. She keeps the accounts, and makes all the purchases and the payments—that is, of course, she used to."

"What is her character otherwise? Is she experienced at all in the world, or is she easily imposed upon?"

"She is very acute, very quick, and is thoroughly practical."

"Do you think she is one whom it would be easy to impose upon?"

"I know that such a thing would be extremely difficult. She is one of those persons who acquire the ascendency wherever she goes. She is far better educated, far more accomplished, and far more clever than I am, or can ever hope to be. She is clear-headed and clear-sighted, with a large store of common-sense. To impose upon her would be difficult, if not impossible. She is very quick to discern character."

"And yet she trusted this Gualtier?"

"She did; and that is a thing which is inexplicable to me. I can only account for it on the ground that she had known him so long, and had been so accustomed to his obsequiousness and apparent conscientiousness, that her usual penetration was at fault. I think she trusted him, as I would have done, partly because there was no other, and partly out of habit."

"What did you say was the name of the place where you were living when your sister met with her accident?"

"Tenby."

"Was Gualtier living in the place?"

"No."

"Where was he?"

"In London."

"How did your sister know that he was there?"

"I can not tell."

"Did you know where he was?"

"I knew nothing about him. But my sister managed our affairs; and when Gualtier left us I dare say he gave his address to my sister, in case of our wanting his services again."

"You dismissed Gualtier, I suppose, because you had no longer need for his services?"

"Yes."

"You say that she never treated him with any particular attention?"

"On the contrary, she never showed any thing but marked *hauteur* toward him. I was indifferent—she took trouble to be dignified."

"Have you any living relatives?"

"No—none."

"Neither on the father's side nor the mother's?"

"No."

"Have you no guardian?"

"At my father's death there was a guardian—a nominal one—but he left the country, and we have never seen him since."

"He is not now in England, then?"

"No."

The chief of police seemed now to have exhausted his questions. He rose, and, with renewed apologies for the trouble which he had given, left the room. Obed and Windham followed, and the former invited him to the library—a room which was called by that name from the fact that there was a book-shelf in it containing a few French novels. Here they sat in silence for a time, and at length the chief began to tell his conclusions.

"I generally keep my mind to myself," said he, "but it is very necessary for you to know what I conceive to be the present aspect of this very important case. Let us see, then, how I would analyze it.

"In the first place, remark the *position of the girls*.

"Two young, inexperienced girls, rich, alone in the world, without any relatives or any connections, managing their own affairs, living in different places—such is the condition of the principals in this matter. The guardian whom their father left has disappeared—gone perhaps to America, perhaps to India—no matter where. He is out of their reach.

"These are the ones with whom this Gualtier comes in contact. He is apparently a very ordinary man, perhaps somewhat cunning, and no doubt anxious to make his way in the world. He is one of those men who can be honest as long as he is forced to be; but who, the moment the pressure is taken off, can perpetrate crime for his own interests, without pity or remorse. I know the type well—cold-blooded, cunning, selfish, hypocritical, secretive, without much intellect, cowardly, but still, under certain circumstances, capable of great boldness. So Gualtier seems to me.

"He was in constant connection with these girls for five or six years. During that time he must have learned all about them and their affairs. He certainly must have learned how completely they were isolated, and how rich they were. Yet I do not believe that he ever had any thought during all that time of venturing upon any plot against them.

"It was Fate itself that threw into his hands an opportunity that could not be neglected. For, mark you, what an unparalleled opportunity it was. One of these sisters—the elder, the manager of affairs, and guardian of the other—meets with an accident so extraordinary that it would be incredible, were it not told in her own handwriting. She finds herself in Naples, ill, friendless, and but recently saved from death. She can not travel to join her sister, so she writes to her sister to come to her in Naples. But how can that young sister come? It is a long journey, and difficult for a friendless girl. She has no friends, so the elder Miss Lorton thinks very naturally of the faithful music-teacher, whom she has known so long, and who is now in London. She writes him, telling him the state of affairs, and no doubt offers him a sufficient sum of money to reward him for giving up his practice for a time. The same day that her sister received her letter, he also receives his.

"Can you not see what effect this startling situation would have on such a man? Here, in brief, he could see a chance for making his fortune, and getting possession of the wealth of these two. By making way with them, one after the other, it could easily be done. He had no pity in his nature, and no conscience in particular to trouble him. Nor were there any fears of future consequences to deter him. These friendless girls would never be missed. They could pass away from the scene, and no avenger could possibly rise up to demand an account of them at his hands. No doubt he was forming his plans from the day of the receipt of his letter all the way to Marseilles.

"Now, in the plot which he formed and carried out, I see several successive steps.

"The first step, of course, was to get rid of the maid Mathilde. Miss Lorton's description of her enables us to see how easily this could be accomplished. She was a timid creature, who does not seem to have been malicious, nor does she seem to have had any idea of fidelity. Gualtier may either have cajoled her, or terrified her. It is also possible that he may have bought her. This may afterward be known when we find the woman herself.

"The next step is evident. It was to get rid of the younger Miss Lorton, with whom he was traveling. It was easy to do this on account of her friendlessness and inexperience. How he succeeded in doing it we have heard from her own lips. He trumped up that story about the steamers not running, and obtained her consent to go in a yacht. This, of course, placed her alone in his power. He picked up a crew of scoundrels, set sail, and on the second night scuttled the vessel, and fled. Something prevented the vessel from sinking, and his intended victim was saved.

"Now what is his third step?

"Of course there can be only one thing, and that third step will be an attempt of a similar kind against the elder Miss Lorton. If it is not too late to guard against this we must do so at once. He is probably with her now. He can easily work upon her. He can represent to her that her sister is ill at Marseilles, and induce her to come here. He can not deceive her about the steamers, but he may happen to find her just after the departure of the steamer, and she, in her impatience, may consent to go in a sailing vessel, to meet the same fate which he designed for her sister.

"After this, to complete my analysis of this man's proceedings, there remains the fourth step.

"Having got rid of the sisters, the next purpose will be to obtain their property. Now if he is left to himself, he will find this very easy.

"I have no doubt that he has made himself fully acquainted with all their investments; or, if he has not, he will find enough among their papers, which will now be open to him. He can correspond with their agents, or forge drafts, or forge a power of attorney for himself, and thus secure gradually a control of all. There are many ways by which a man in his situation can obtain all that he wishes. Their bankers seem to be purely business agents, and they have apparently no one who takes a deeper interest in them.

"And now the thing to be done is to head him off. This may be done in various ways.

"First, to prevent the fulfillment of his design on the elder Miss Lorton, I can send off a message at once to the Neapolitan government, and

obtain the agency of the Neapolitan police to secure his arrest. If he is very prompt he may have succeeded in leaving Naples with his victim before this; but there is a chance that he is resting on his oars, and, perhaps, deferring the immediate prosecution of the third step.

"Secondly, I must put my machinery to work to discover the maid Mathilde, and secure her arrest. She will be a most important witness in the case. If she is a partner in Gualtier's guilt, she can clear up the whole mystery.

"Thirdly, we must have information of all this sent to Miss Lorton's bankers in London, and her solicitors, so as to prevent Gualtier from accomplishing his fourth step, and also in order to secure their co-operation in laying a trap for him which will certainly insure his capture.

"As for the younger Miss Lorton, she had better remain in Marseilles for six or eight weeks, so that if the elder Miss Lorton should escape she may find her here. Meantime the Neapolitan police will take care of her, if she is in Naples, and communicate to her where her sister is, so that she can join her, or write her. At any rate, Miss Lorton must be persuaded to wait here till she hears from her sister, or of her."

Other things were yet to be done before the preliminary examinations could be completed.

The first was the examination of the man who had disposed of the yacht to Gualtier. He was found without any difficulty, and brought before the chief. It seems he was a common broker, who had bought the vessel at auction, on speculation, because the price was so low. He knew nothing whatever about nautical matters, and hated the sea. He had hardly ever been on board of her, and had never examined her. He merely held her in his possession till he could find a chance of selling her. He had sold her for more than double the money that he had paid for her, and thought the speculation had turned out very good. Nothing had ever been told him as to any peculiarity in the construction of the yacht. As far as he knew, the existence of such could not have been found out.

On being asked whether the purchaser had assigned any reason for buying the vessel, he said no; and from that fact the chief seemed to form a more respectful opinion of Gualtier than he had hitherto appeared to entertain. Common cunning would have been profuse in stating motives, and have given utterance to any number of lies. But Gualtier took refuge in silence. He bought the vessel, and said nothing about motives or reasons. And, indeed, why should he have done so?

Obed and Windham visited the yacht, in company with the chief. She was in the dry dock, and the water had flowed out from her, leaving her open for inspection. Zillah's trunks were taken out and conveyed to her, though their contents were not in a condition which might make them of any future value. Still, all Zillah's jewelry was there, and all the little keepsakes which had accumulated during her past life. The recovery of her trunks gave her the greatest delight.

A very careful examination of the yacht was made by the chief of police and his two companions. In front was a roomy forecastle; in the stern was a spacious cabin, with an after-cabin adjoining; between the two was the hold. On close examination, however, an iron bulkhead was found, which ran the whole length of the yacht on each side. This had evidently been quite unknown to Gualtier. He and his crew had scuttled the vessel, leaving it, as they supposed, to sink; but she could not sink, for the air-tight compartments, like those of a life-boat, kept her afloat.

CHAPTER XXXII.

TOO MUCH TOGETHER.

Windham had exhibited the deepest interest in all these investigations. On the day after Zillah's interview with the chief of police he called and informed them that his business in England, though important, was not pressing, and that he intended to remain in Marseilles for a few days, partly for the sake of seeing how the investigations of the police would turn out, and partly, as he said, for the sake of enjoying a little more of the society of his friend Chute. Thenceforth he spent very much of his time at Chute's hotel, and Zillah and he saw very much of one another. Perhaps it was the fact that he only was altogether of Zillah's own order; or it may have been the general charm of his manner, his noble presence, his elevated sentiments, his rich, full, ringing English voice. Whatever it may have been, however, she did not conceal the pleasure which his society afforded her. She was artless and open; her feelings expressed themselves readily, and were made manifest in her looks and gestures. Still, there was a melancholy behind all this which Windham could not but notice—a melancholy penetrating far beneath the surface talk in which they both in-

dulged. He, on his part, revealed to Zillah unmistakably the same profound melancholy which has already been mentioned. She tried to conjecture what it was, and thought of no other thing than the bereavement which was indicated by the sombre emblem on his hat. Between these two there was never laughter, rarely levity; but their conversation, when it turned even on trifles, was earnest and sincere. Day after day passed, and each interview grew to be more pleasant than the preceding one. Often Obed Chute joined in the conversation; but their minds were of a totally different order from his; and never did they feel this so strongly as when some hard, dry, practical, and thoroughly sensible remark broke in upon some little delicate flight of fancy in which they had been indulging.

One day Windham came to propose a ride. Zillah assented eagerly. Obed did not care to go, as he was anxious to call on the chief of police. So Zillah and Windham rode out together into the country, and took the road by the sea coast, where it winds on, commanding magnificent sea views or sublime prospects of distant mountains at almost every turning. Hitherto they had always avoided speaking of England. Each seemed instinctively to shun the mention of that name; nor did either ever seek to draw the other out on that subject. What might be the rank of either at home, or the associations or connections, neither ever ventured to inquire. Each usually spoke on any subject of a general nature which seemed to come nearest. On this occasion, however, Windham made a first attempt toward speaking about himself and his past. Something happened to suggest India. It was only with a mighty effort that Zillah kept down an impulse to rhapsodize about that glorious land, where all her childhood had been passed, and whose scenes were still impressed so vividly upon her memory. The effort at self-restraint was successful; nor did she by any word show how well known to her were those Indian scenes of which Windham went on to speak. He talked of tiger hunts; of long journeys through the hot plain or over the lofty mountain; of desperate fights with savage tribes. At length he spoke of the Indian mutiny. He had been at Delhi, and had taken part in the conflict and in the triumph. What particular part he had taken he did not say, but he seemed to have been in the thick of the fight wherever it raged. Carried away by the glorious recollections that crowded upon his memory, he rose to a higher eloquence than any which he had before attempted. The passion of the fight came back. He mentioned by name glorious companions in arms. He told of heroic exploits—dashing acts of almost superhuman valor, where human nature became ennobled and man learned the possibilities of man. The fervid excitement that burned in his soul was communicated to the fiery nature of Zillah, who was always so quick to catch the contagion of any noble emotion; his admiration for all that was elevated and true and pure found an echo in the heart of her who was the daughter of General Pomeroy and the pupil of Lord Chetwynde. Having herself breathed all her life an atmosphere of noble sentiments, her nature exulted in the words of this high-souled, this chivalric man, who himself, fresh from a scene which had tried men's souls as they had not been tried for many an age, had shared the dangers and the triumphs of those who had fought and conquered there. No, never before had Zillah known such hours as these, where she was brought face to face with a hero whose eye, whose voice, whose manner, made her whole being thrill, and whose sentiments found an echo in her inmost soul.

And did Windham perceive this? Could he help it? Could he avoid seeing the dark olive face which flushed deep at his words—the large, liquid, luminous eyes which, beneath those deep-fringed lids, lighted up with the glorious fires of that fervid soul—the delicate frame that quivered in the strong excitement of impassioned feelings? Could he avoid seeing that this creature of feeling and of passion thrilled or calmed, grew indignant or pitiful, became stern or tearful, just as he gave the word? Could he help seeing that it was in his power to strike the key-note to which all her sensitive nature would respond?

Yet in all Zillah's excitement of feeling she never asked any questions. No matter what might be the intensity of desire that filled her, she never forgot to restrain her curiosity. Had she not heard before of this regiment and that regiment from the letters of Guy? Windham seemed to have been in many of the places mentioned in those letters. This was natural, as he belonged to the army which had taken Delhi. But in addition to this there was another wonder—there were those hill stations in which she had lived, of which Windham spoke so familiarly. Of course—she thought after due reflection—every British officer in the north of India must be familiar with places which are their common resort; but it affected her strangely at first; for hearing him speak of them was like hearing one speak of home.

Another theme of conversation was found in his eventful voyage from India. He told her about the outbreak of the flames, the alarm of the passengers, the coward mob of panic-stricken wretches, who had lost all manliness and all human feeling in their abject fear. Then he described the tall form of Obed Chute as it towered above the crowd. Obed, according to Windham's account, when he first saw him, had two men by their collars in one hand, while in the other he held his revolver. His voice with its shrill accent rang out like a trumpet peal as he threatened to blow out the brains of any man who dared to touch a boat, or to go off the quarter-deck. While he threatened he also taunted them. "*You* Britishers!" he cried. "If you are—which I doubt—then I'm ashamed of the mother country."

Now it happened that Obed Chute had already given to Zillah a full description of his first view of Windham, on that same occasion. As he stood with his revolver, he saw Windham, he said—pale, stern, self-possessed, but active, with a line of passengers formed, who were busy passing buckets along, and he was just detailing half a dozen to relieve the sailors at the pumps. "That man," concluded Obed Chute, "had already got to work, while I was indulging in a 'spread-eagle.'"

Windham, however, said nothing of himself, so that Zillah might have supposed, for all that he said, that he himself was one of that panic-

stricken crowd whom Obed Chute had reviled and threatened.

Nor was this all. These rides were repeated every day. Obed Chute declared that this was the best thing for her in the world, and that she must go out as often as was possible. Zillah made no objection. So the pleasure was renewed from day to day. But Windham could speak of other things than battle, and murder, and sudden death. He was deeply read in literature. He loved poetry with passionate ardor. All English poetry was familiar to him. The early English metrical romance, Chaucer, Spenser, the Elizabethan dramatists, Waller, Marvell, and Cowley, Lovelace and Suckling, were all appreciated fully. He had admiration for the poets of the Restoration; he had no words to express the adoration which he felt for Milton; Gray and Collins he knew by heart; Thomson and Cowper he could mention with appreciation; while the great school of the Revolutionary poets rivaled all the rest in the admiration which they extorted from him. Tennyson and the Brownings were, however, most in his thoughts; and as these were equally dear to Zillah, they met on common ground. What struck Zillah most was the fact that occasional stray bits, which she had seen in magazines, and had treasured in her head, were equally known, and equally loved by this man, who would repeat them to her with his full melodious voice, giving thus a new emphasis and a new meaning to words whose meaning she thought she already felt to the full. In these was a deeper meaning, as Windham said them, than she had ever known before. He himself seemed to have felt the meaning of some of these. What else could have caused that tremulous tone which, in its deep musical vibrations, made these words ring deep within her heart? Was there not a profounder meaning in the mind of this man, whose dark eyes rested upon hers with such an unfathomable depth of tenderness and sympathy —those eyes which had in them such a magnetic power that even when her head was turned away she could *feel* them resting upon her, and knew that he was looking at her—with what deep reverence! with what unutterable longing! with what despair! Yes, despair. For on this man's face, with all the reverence and longing which it expressed, there was never any hope, there was never any look of inquiry after sympathy; it was mute reverence—silent adoration; the look that one may cast upon a divinity, content with the offer of adoration, but never dreaming of a return.

The days flew by like lightning. Zillah passed them in a kind of dream. She only seemed awake when Windham came. When he left, all was barrenness and desolation. Time passed, but she thought nothing of Naples. Obed had explained to her the necessity of waiting at Marseilles till fresh news should come from Hilda, and had been surprised at the ease with which she had been persuaded to stay. In fact, for a time Hilda seemed to have departed out of the sphere of her thoughts, into some distant realm where those thoughts never wandered. She was content to remain here—to postpone her departure, and wait for any thing at all. Sometimes she thought of the end of all this. For Windham must one day depart. This had to end. It could not last. And what then? Then? Ah then! She would not think of it. Calamities had fallen to her lot before, and it now appeared to her that another calamity was to come —dark, indeed, and dreadful; worse, she feared, than others which she had braved in her young life.

For one thing she felt grateful. Windham never ventured beyond the limits of friendship. To this he had a right. Had he not saved her from death? But he never seemed to think of transgressing the strictest limits of conventional politeness. He never indulged at even the faintest attempt at a compliment. Had he even done this much it would have been a painful embarrassment. She would have been forced to shrink back into herself and her dreary life, and put an end to such interviews forever. But the trial did not come, and she had no cause to shrink back. So it was that the bright golden hours sped onward, bearing on the happy, happy days; and Windham lingered on, letting his English business go.

Another steamer had arrived from Naples, and yet another, but no word came from Hilda. Zillah had written to her address, explaining every thing, but no answer came. The chief of police had received an answer to his original message, stating that the authorities at Naples would do all in their power to fulfill his wishes; but since then nothing further had been communicated. His efforts to search after Gualtier and Mathilde, in France, were quite unsuccessful. He urged Obed Chute and Miss Lorton to wait still longer, until something definite might be found. Windham waited also. Whatever his English business was, he deferred it. He was anxious, he said, to see how these efforts would turn out, and he hoped to be of use himself.

Meanwhile Obed Chute had fitted up the yacht, and had obliterated every mark of the casualty with which she had met. In this the party sometimes sailed. Zillah might perhaps have objected to put her foot on board a vessel which was associated with the greatest calamity of her life; but the presence of Windham seemed to bring a counter-association which dispelled her mournful memories. She might not fear to trust herself in that vessel which had once almost been her grave, with the man who had saved her from that grave. Windham showed himself a first-rate sailor. Zillah wondered greatly how he could have added this to his other accomplishments, but did not venture to ask him. There was a great gulf between them; and to have asked any personal question, however slight, would have been an attempt to leap that gulf. She dared not ask any thing. She herself was in a false position. She was living under an assumed name, and constant watchfulness was necessary. The name "Lorton" had not yet become familiar to her ears. Often when addressed, she caught herself thinking that some one else was spoken to. But after all, as to the question of Windham's seamanship, that was a thing which was not at all wonderful, since every Englishman of any rank is supposed to own a yacht, and to know all about it.

Often Obed and his family went out with them; but often these two went out alone. Perhaps there was a conventional impropriety in this; but neither Obed nor his sister thought of

it; Windham certainly was not the one to regard it; and Zillah was willing to shut her eyes to it. And so for many days they were thrown together. Cruising thus over the Mediterranean, that glory of seas—the blue, the dark, the deep—where the transparent water shows the sea depths far down, with all the wonders of the sea; where the bright atmosphere shows sharply defined the outlines of distant objects—cruising here on the Mediterranean, where France stretches out her hand to Italy; where on the horizon the purple hills arise, their tops covered with a diadem of snow; where the air breathes balm, and the tideless sea washes evermore the granite base of long mountain chains, evermore wearing away and scattering the débris along the sounding beach. Cruising over the Mediterranean—oh! what is there on earth equal to this? Here was a place, here was scenery, which might remain forever fixed in the memories of both of these, who now, day after day, under these cloudless skies, drifted along. Drifting? Yes, it was drifting. And where were they drifting to? Where? Neither of them asked. In fact, they were drifting nowhere; or, rather, they were drifting to that point where fate would interpose, and sever them, to send them onward upon their different courses. They might drift for a time; but, at last, they must separate, and then—what? Would they ever again reunite? Would they ever again meet? Who might say?

Drifting!

Well, if one drifts any where, the Mediterranean is surely the best place; or, at least, the most favorable; for there all things combine to favor, in the highest degree, that state of moral "drifting" into which people sometimes fall.

The time passed quickly. Weeks flew by. Nothing new had been discovered. No information had come from Naples. No letter had come from Hilda. While Zillah waited, Windham also waited, and thus passed six or seven weeks in Marseilles, which was rather a long time for one who was hurrying home on important business. But he was anxious, he said, to see the result of the investigations of the police. That result was, at length, made known. It was nothing; and the chief of police advised Obed Chute to go on without delay to Naples, and urge the authorities there to instant action. He seemed to think that they had neglected the business, or else attended to it in such a way that it had failed utterly. He assured Obed Chute that he would still exert all his power to track the villain Gualtier, and, if possible, bring him to justice. This, Obed believed that he would do; for the chief had come now to feel a personal as well as a professional interest in the affair, as though somehow his credit were at stake. Under these circumstances, Obed prepared to take his family and Miss Lorton to Naples, by the next steamer.

Windham said nothing. There was a pallor on the face of each of them as Obed told them his plan—telling it, too, with the air of one who is communicating the most joyful intelligence, and thinking nothing of the way in which such joyous news is received. Zillah made no observation. Involuntarily her eyes sought those of Windham. She read in his face a depth of despair which was without hope—profound—unalterable—unmovable.

That day they took their last ride. But few words passed between them. Windham was gloomy and taciturn. Zillah was silent and sad. At length, as they rode back, they came to a place on the shore a few miles away from the city. Here Windham reined in his horse, and, as Zillah stopped, he pointed out to the sea.

The sun was setting. Its rich red light fell full upon the face of Zillah, lighting it up with radiant glory as it did on that memorable morning when her beautiful face was upturned as her head lay upon his breast, and her gleaming ebon hair floated over his shoulders. He looked at her. Her eyes were not closed now, as they were then, but looked back into his, revealing in their unfathomable depths an abyss of melancholy, of sorrow, of longing, and of tenderness.

"Miss Lorton," said Windham, in a deep voice, which was shaken by an uncontrollable emotion, and whose tremulous tones thrilled through all Zillah's being, and often and often afterward recurred to her memory—"Miss Lorton, this is our last ride—our last interview. Here I will say my last farewell. To-morrow I will see you, but not alone. Oh, my friend, my friend, my sweet friend, whom I held in my arms once, as I saved you from death, we must now part forever! I go—I must go. My God! where? To a life of horror! to a living death! to a future without one ray of hope! Once it was dark enough, God knows; but now—but now it is intolerable; for since I have seen you I tremble at the thought of encountering that which awaits me in England!"

He held out his hand as he concluded. Zillah's eyes fell. His words had been poured forth with passionate fervor. She had nothing to say. Her despair was as deep as his. She held out her hand to meet his. It was as cold as ice. He seized it with a convulsive grasp, and his frame trembled as he held it.

Suddenly, as she looked down, overcome by her own agitation, a sob struck her ears. She looked up. He seemed to be devouring her with his eyes, as they were fixed on her wildly, hungrily, yet despairingly. And from those eyes, which had so often gazed steadily and proudly in the face of death, there now fell, drop by drop, tears which seemed wrung out from his very heart. It was but for a moment. As he caught her eyes he dropped her hand, and hastily brushed his tears away. Zillah's heart throbbed fast and furiously; it seemed ready to burst. Her breath failed; she reeled in her saddle. But the paroxysm passed, and she regained her self-command.

"Let us ride home," said Windham, in a stern voice.

They rode home without speaking another word.

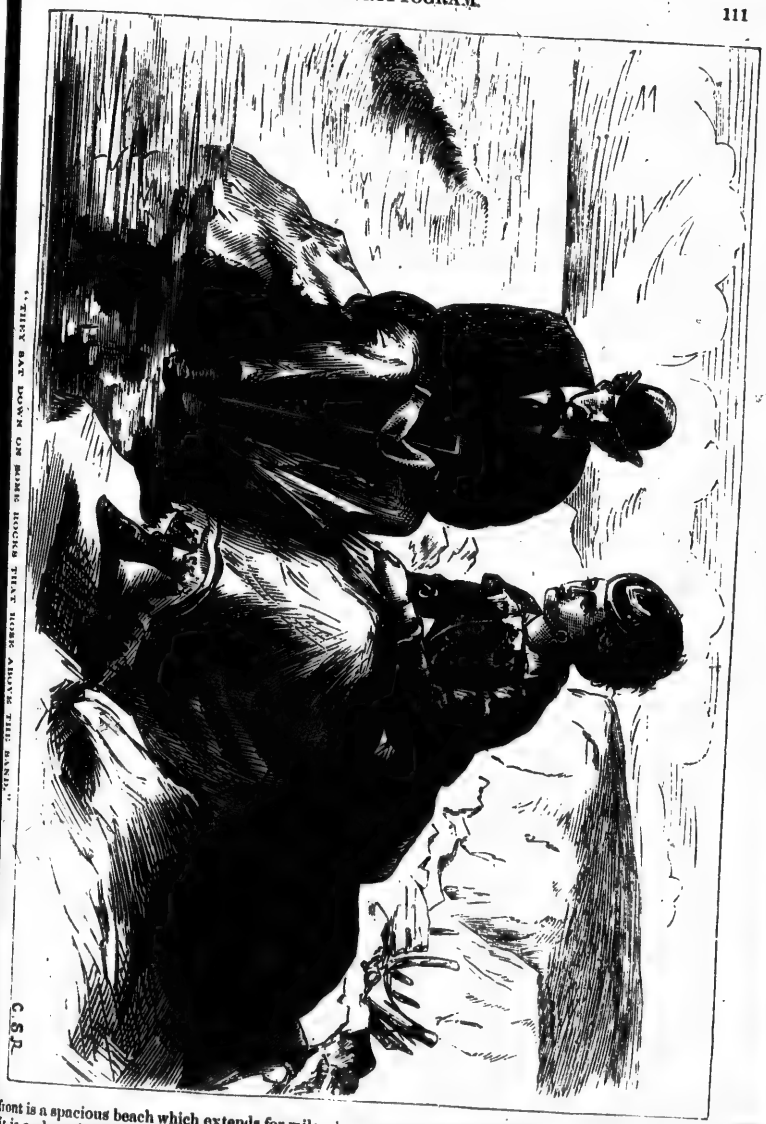
The next day Windham saw them on board the steamer. He stood on the wharf and watched it till it was out of sight. Then he departed in the train for the north, and for England.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE AGENT'S REPORT.

On the south coast of Hampshire there is a little village which looks toward the Isle of Wight. It consists of a single street, and in

front is a spacious
It is a charming p
sion to pass the su
is unsurpassed, an
yachting excellent.
able, and has not
influx of wealthy s
merous houses wh



front is a spacious beach which extends for miles. It is a charming place for those who love seclusion to pass the summer months in, for the view is unsurpassed, and the chances for boating or yachting excellent. The village inn is comfortable, and has not yet been demoralized by the influx of wealthy strangers, while there are numerous houses where visitors may secure quiet accommodations and a large share of comfort.

It was about six weeks after the disappearance of Hilda, and about a fortnight after Zillah's departure in search of her, that a man drove into this village from Southampton, up to a house which was at the extreme eastern end, and inquired for Miss Davis. He was asked to come

in; and after waiting for a few minutes in the snug parlor, a lady entered. The slender and elegant figure, the beautiful features, and well-bred air of this lady, need not be again described to those who have already become acquainted with Miss Krieff. Nor need Gualtier's personal appearance be recounted once more to those who have already a sufficient acquaintance with his physiognomy.

She shook hands with him in silence, and then, taking a chair and motioning him to another, she sat for some time looking at him. At length she uttered one single word:

"Well?"

"It's done," said Gualtier, solemnly. "It's all over."

Hilda caught her breath—giving utterance to what seemed something between a sob and a sigh, but she soon recovered herself.

Gualtier was sitting near to her. He leaned forward as Hilda sat in silence, apparently overcome by his intelligence, and in a low whisper he said:

"Do you not feel inclined to take a walk somewhere?"

Hilda said nothing, but, rising, she went up stairs, and in a few minutes returned dressed for a walk. The two then set out, and Hilda led the way to the beach. Along the beach they walked for a long distance, until at length they came to a place which was remote from any human habitation. Behind was the open country, before them the sea, whose surf came rolling in in long, low swells, and on either side lay the beach. Here they sat down on some rocks that rose above the sand, and for some time said nothing. Hilda was the first to speak. Before saying any thing, however, she looked all around, as though to assure herself that they were out of the reach of all listeners. Then she spoke, in a slow, measured voice:

"Is *she* gone, then?"

"She is," said Gualtier.

There was another long silence. What Hilda's feelings were could not be told by her face. To outward appearance she was calm and unmoved, and perhaps she felt so in her heart. It was possible that the thought of Zillah's death did not make her heart beat faster by one throb, or give her one single approach to a pang of remorse. Her silence might have been merely the meditation of one who, having completed one part of a plan, was busy thinking about the completion of the remainder. And yet, on the other hand, it may have been something more than this. Zillah in life was hateful, but Zillah dead was another thing; and if she had any softness, or any capacity for remorse, it might well have made itself manifest at such a time. Gualtier sat looking at her in silence, waiting for her to speak again, attending on her wishes as usual; for this man, who could be so merciless to others, in her presence resigned all his will to hers, and seemed to be only anxious to do her pleasure, whatever it might be.

"Tell me about it," said Hilda at length, without moving, and still keeping her eyes fixed abstractedly on the sea.

Gualtier then began with his visit to Zillah at Tenby. He spoke of Zillah's joy at getting the letter, and her eager desire to be once more with her friend, and so went on till the time of their arrival at Marseilles. He told how Zillah all the way could talk of nothing else than Hilda; of her feverish anxiety to travel as fast as possible; of her fearful anticipations that Hilda might have a relapse, and that after all she might be too late; how excited she grew, and how despairing, when she was told that the steamers had stopped running, and how eagerly she accepted his proposal to go on in a yacht. The story of such affectionate devotion might have moved even the hardest heart, but Hilda gave no sign of any feeling whatever. She sat motionless—listening, but saying nothing. Whether Gualtier himself was trying to test her feelings by telling so piteous a story, or whether some remorse of his own, and some compassion for so loving a heart, still lingering within him, forced him to tell his story in this way, can not be known. Whatever his motives were, no effect was produced on the listener, as far as outward signs were concerned.

"With Mathilde," said he, "I had some difficulty. She was very unwilling to leave her mistress at such a time to make a voyage alone, but she was a timid creature, and I was able to work upon her fears. I told her that her mistress had committed a crime against the English laws in running away and living under an assumed name; that her husband was now in England, and would certainly pursue his wife, have her arrested, and punish severely all who had aided or abetted her. This terrified the silly creature greatly; and then, by the offer of a handsome sum and the promise of getting her a good situation, I soothed her fears and gained her consent to desert her mistress. She is now in London, and has already gained a new situation."

"Where?" said Hilda, abruptly.

"In Highgate Seminary, the place that I was connected with formerly. She is teacher of French, on a good salary."

"Is that safe?" said Hilda, after some thought.

"Why not?"

"She might give trouble."

"Oh no. Her situation is a good one, and she need never leave it."

"I can scarcely see how she can retain it long; she may be turned out, and then—we may see something of her."

"You forget that I am aware of her movements, and can easily put a stop to any efforts of that kind."

"Still I should be better satisfied if she were in France—or somewhere."

"Should you? Then I can get her a place in France, where you will never hear of her again."

Hilda was silent.

"My plan about the yacht," said Gualtier, "was made before I left London. I said nothing to you about it, for I thought it might not succeed. The chief difficulty was to obtain men devoted to my interests. I made a journey to Marseilles first, and found out that there were several vessels of different sizes for sale. The yacht was the best and most suitable for our purposes, and, fortunately, it remained unsold till I had reached Marseilles again with *her*. I obtained the men in London. It was with some difficulty, for it was not merely common ruffians that I wanted, but seamen who could sail a vessel, and at the same time be willing to take part in the act which I contemplated. I told them

that all which was required of them was to sail for two days or so, and then leave the vessel. I think they imagined it was a plan to make money by insuring the vessel and then deserting her. Such things are often done. I had to pay the rascals heavily; but I was not particular, and, fortunately, they all turned out to be of the right sort, except one—but no matter about him."

"Except one!" said Hilda. "What do you mean by that?"

"I will explain after a while," said Gualtier.

"If she had not been so innocent," said Gualtier, "I do not see how my plan could have succeeded. But she knew nothing. She didn't even know enough to make inquiries herself. She accepted all that I said with the most implicit trust, and believed it all as though it were Gospel. It was, therefore, the easiest thing in the world to manage her. Her only idea was to get to you."

Gualtier paused for a moment.

"Go on," said Hilda, coldly.

"Well, all the preparations were made, and the day came. Mathilde had left. *She* did not seem to feel the desertion much. She said nothing at all to me about the loss of her maid, although after three or four years of service it must have been galling to her to lose her maid so abruptly, and to get such a letter as that silly thing wrote at my dictation. She came on board, and seemed very much satisfied with all the arrangements. I had done every thing that I could think of to make it pleasant for her—on the same principle, I suppose," he added, dryly, "that they have in jails—where they are sure to give a good breakfast to a poor devil on the morning of his execution."

"You may as well omit allusions of that sort," said Hilda, sternly.

Gualtier made no observation, but proceeded with his narrative.

"We sailed for two days, and, at length, came to within about fifty miles of Leghorn. During all that time she had been cheerful, and was much on deck. She tried to read, but did not seem able to do so. She seemed to be involved in thought, as a general thing; and, by the occasional questions which she asked, I saw that all her thoughts were about you and Naples. So passed the two days, and the second night came."

Gualtier paused.

Hilda sat motionless, without saying a word. Gualtier himself seemed reluctant to go on; but he had to conclude his narrative, and so he forced himself to proceed.

"It was midnight"—he went on, in a very low voice—"it was exceedingly dark. The day had been fine, but the sky was now all overclouded. The sea, however, was comparatively smooth, and every thing was favorable to the undertaking. The boat was all ready. It was a good-sized boat, which we had towed behind us. I had prepared a mast and a sail, and had put some provisions in the locker. The men were all expecting—"

"Never mind your preparations," exclaimed Hilda, fiercely. "Omit all that—go on, and don't kill me with your long preliminaries."

"If you had such a story to tell," said Gualtier, humbly, "you would be glad to take refuge for a little while in preliminaries."

Hilda said nothing.

"It was midnight," said Gualtier, resuming his story once more, and speaking with perceptible agitation in the tones of his voice—"it was midnight, and intensely dark. The men were at the bow, waiting. All was ready. In the cabin all had been still for some time. Her lights had been put out an hour previously."

"Well?" said Hilda, with feverish impatience, as he again hesitated.

"Well," said Gualtier, rousing himself with a start from a momentary abstraction into which he had fallen—"the first thing I did was to go down into the hold with some augers, and bore holes through the vessel's bottom."

Another silence followed.

"*Some* augers," said Hilda, after a time. "Did you need more than one?"

"One might break."

"Did any one go with you?" she persisted.

"Yes—one of the men—the greatest ruffian of the lot. 'Black Bill,' he was called. I've got something to tell you about him. I took him down to help me, for I was afraid that I might not make a sure thing of it. Between us we did the job. The water began to rush in through half a dozen holes, which we succeeded in making, and we got out on deck as the yacht was rapidly filling."

Again Gualtier paused for some time.

"Why do you hesitate so?" asked Hilda, quite calmly.

Gualtier looked at her for a moment, with something like surprise in his face; but without making any reply, he went on:

"I hurried into the cabin and listened. There was no sound. I put my ear close to the inner door. All was utterly and perfectly still. She was evidently sleeping. I then hurried out and ordered the men into the boat. Before embarking myself I went back to the hold, and reached my hands down. I felt the water. It was within less than three feet of the deck. It had filled very rapidly. I then went on board the boat, unfastened the line, and we pulled away, steering east, as nearly as possible toward Leghorn. We had rowed for about half an hour, when I recollected that I ought to have locked the cabin door. But it was too late to return. We could never have found the schooner if we had tried. The night was intensely dark. Besides, by that time the schooner—*was at the bottom of the sea!*"

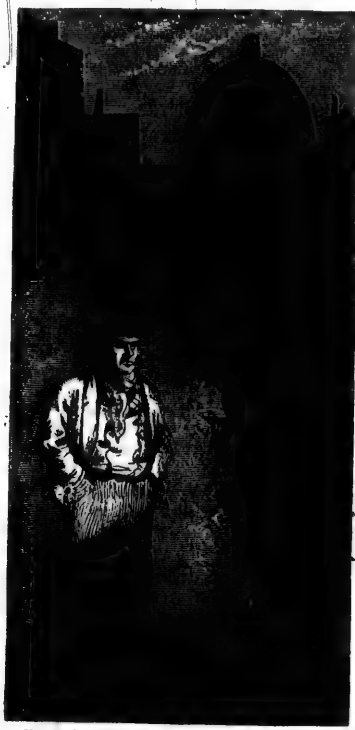
A long silence followed. Hilda looked steadily out on the water, and Gualtier watched her with hungry eyes. At last, as though she felt his eyes upon her, she turned and looked at him. A great change had come over her face. It was fixed and rigid and haggard—her eyes had something in them that was awful. Her lips were white—her face was ashen. She tried to speak, but at first no sound escaped. At last she spoke in a hoarse voice utterly unlike her own.

"*She* is gone, then."

"*For evermore!*" said Gualtier.

Hilda turned her stony face once more toward the sea, while Gualtier looked all around, and then turned his gaze back to this woman for whom he had done so much.

"After a while"—he began once more, in a slow, dull voice—"the wind came up, and we



"BLACK BILL HAS KEPT ON MY TRACK."

hoisted sail. We went on our way rapidly, and by the middle of the following day we arrived at Leghorn. I paid the men off and dismissed them. I myself came back to London immediately, over the Alps, through Germany. I thought it best to avoid Marseilles. I do not know what the men did with themselves; but I think that they would have made some trouble for me if I had not hurried away. Black Bill said as much when I was paying them. He said that when he made the bargain he thought it was only some 'bloody insurance business,' and, if he had known what it was to have been, he would have made a different bargain. As it was, he swore I ought to double the amount I had promised. I refused, and we parted with some high words—he vowing vengeance, and I saying nothing."

"Ah!" said Hilda, who had succeeded in recovering something of her ordinary calm, "that was foolish in you—you ought to have satisfied their demands."

"I have thought so since."

"They may create trouble. You should have stopped their mouths."

"That is the very thing I wished to do; but I was afraid of being too lavish, for fear that they would suspect the importance of the thing. I thought if I appeared mean and stingy and poor they might conclude that I was some very ordinary person, and that the affair was of a very ordinary kind—concerning very common people. If they suspected the true nature of the case they would be sure to inform the police. As it is, they will hold their tongues; or, at the worst, they will try and track me."

"Track you?" said Hilda, who was struck by something in Gualtier's tone.

"Yes; the fact is—I suppose I ought to tell you—I have been tracked all the way from Leghorn."

"By whom?"

"Black Bill—I don't know how he managed it, but he has certainly kept on my track. I saw him at Brieg, in Switzerland, first; next I saw him in the railway station at Strasbourg; and yesterday I saw him in London, standing opposite the door of my lodgings, as I was leaving for this place."

"That looks bad," said Hilda, seriously.

"He is determined to find out what this business is, and so he watches me. He doesn't threaten, he doesn't demand money—he is simply watching. His game is a deep one."

"Do you suppose that the others are with him?"

"Not at all. I think he is trying to work this up for himself."

"It is bad," said Hilda. "How do you know that he is not in this village?"

"As to that, it is quite impossible—and I never expect to see him again, in fact."

"Why not?"

"Because I have thrown him off the track completely. While I was going straight to London it was easy for him to follow—especially as I did not care to dodge him on the continent; but now, if he ever catches sight of me again he is much deeper than I take him to be."

"But perhaps he has followed you here."

"That is impossible," said Gualtier, confidently. "My mode of getting away from London was peculiar. As soon as I saw him opposite my lodgings my mind was made up; so I took the train for Bristol, and went about forty miles, when I got out and came back; then I drove to the Great Northern Station immediately, went north about twenty miles, and came back; after this I took the Southampton train, and came down last night. It would be rather difficult for one man to follow another on such a journey. As to my lodgings, I do not intend to go back. He will probably inquire, and find that I have left all my things there, and I dare say he will watch that place for the next six months at least, waiting for my return. And so I think he may be considered as finally disposed of."

"You do not intend to send for your things, then?"

"No. There are articles there of considerable value; but I will let them all go—it will be taken as a proof that I am dead. My friend Black Bill will hear of this, and fall in with that opinion. I may also arrange a 'distressing casualty' paragraph to insert in the papers for his benefit."

Hilda now relapsed into silence once more, and seemed to lose herself in a fit of abstraction so profound that she was conscious of nothing around her. Gualtier sat regarding her silently, and wondering whither her thoughts were tend-

ing. A long time passed. The surf was rolling on the shore, the wind was blowing lightly and gently over the sea; afar the blue water was dotted with innumerable sails; there were ships passing in all directions, and steamers of all sizes leaving behind them great trails of smoke.

Over two hours had passed since they first sat down here, and now, at length, the tide, which had all the while been rising, began to approach them, until at last the first advance waves came within a few inches of Hilda's feet. She did not notice it; but this occurrence gave Gualtier a chance to interrupt her meditations.

"The tide is rising," said he, abruptly; "the next wave will be up to us. We had better move."

It was with a start that Hilda roused herself. Then she rose slowly, and walked up the beach with Gualtier.

"I should like very much to know," said he, at length, in an insinuating voice, "if there is any thing more that I can do just now."

"I have been thinking," said Hilda, without hesitation, "of my next course of action, and I have decided to go back to Chetwynde at once."

"To Chetwynde!"

"Yes, and to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow!"

"There is no cause for delay," said Hilda. "The time has at last come when I can act."

"To Chetwynde!" repeated Gualtier. "I can scarcely understand your purpose."

"Perhaps not," said Hilda, dryly; "it is one that need not be explained, for it will not fail to reveal itself in the course of time under any circumstances."

"But you have some ostensible purpose for going there. You can not go there merely to take up your abode on the old footing."

"I do not intend to do that," was the cool response. "You may be sure that I have a purpose. I am going to make certain very necessary arrangements for the advent of Lady Chetwynde."

"Lady Chetwynde!" repeated Gualtier, with a kind of gasp.

"Yes," said Hilda, who by this time had recovered all her usual self-control, and exhibited all her old force of character, her daring, and her coolness, which had long ago given her such an ascendency over Gualtier. "Yes," she repeated, quietly returning the other's look of amazement, "and why should I not? Lady Chetwynde has been absent for her health. Is it not natural that she should send me to make preparations for her return to her own home? She prefers it to Pomeroy."

"Good God!" said Gualtier, quite forgetting himself, as a thought struck him which filled him with bewilderment. Could he fathom her purpose? Was the idea that occurred to him in very deed the one which was in her mind? Could it be? And was it for this that he had labored?

"Is Lord Chetwynde coming home?" he asked at length, as Hilda looked at him with a strange expression.

"Lord Chetwynde? I should say, most certainly not."

"Do you know for certain?"

"No. I have narrowly watched the papers, but have found out nothing, nor have any letters come which could tell me; but I have reasons for supposing that the very last thing that Lord Chetwynde would think of doing would be to come home."

"Why do you suppose that? Is there not his rank, his position, and his wealth?"

"Yes; but the correspondence between him and Lady Chetwynde has for years been of so very peculiar a character—that is, at least, on Lady Chetwynde's part—that the very fact of her being in England would, to a man of his character, be sufficient, I should think, to keep him away forever. And therefore I think that Lord Chetwynde will endure his grief about his father, and perhaps overcome it, in the Indian residency to which he was lately appointed. Perhaps he may end his days there—who can tell? If he should, it would be too much to expect that Lady Chetwynde would take it very much to heart."

"But it seems to me, in spite of all that you have said, that nine men out of ten would come home. They could be much happier in England, and the things of which you have spoken would not necessarily give trouble."

"That is very true; but, at the same time, Lord Chetwynde, in my opinion, happens to be that tenth man who would not come home; for, if he did, it would be Lady Chetwynde's money that he would enjoy, and to a man of his nature this would be intolerable—especially as she has been diligently taunting him with the fact that he has cheated her for the last five years."

Gualtier heard this with fresh surprise.

"I did not know before that there had been so very peculiar a correspondence," said he.

"I think that it will decide him to stay in India."

"But suppose, in spite of all this, that he should come home."

"That is a fact which should never be lost sight of," said Hilda, very gravely—"nor is it ever lost sight of; one must be prepared to encounter such a thing as that."

"But how?"

"Oh, there are various ways," said Hilda.

"He can be avoided, shunned, fled from," said Gualtier, "but how can he be encountered?"

"If he does come," said Hilda, "he will be neither avoided nor shunned. He will be assuredly encountered—and that, too, *face to face!*"

Gualtier looked at her in fresh perplexity. Not yet had he fathomed the full depth of Hilda's deep design.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

REMODELING THE HOUSEHOLD.

Two or three days afterward, Hilda, attended by Gualtier, drove up to the inn of the little village near Chetwynde Castle. Gualtier stopped here, and Hilda drove on to the Castle itself. Her luggage was with her, but it was small, consisting of one small trunk, which looked as though it were intended to make but a short stay. On her arrival the servants all greeted her respectfully, and asked eagerly after Lady Chetwynde. Her ladyship, Hilda informed them, was still too unwell to travel, but was much better than when she left. She had sent her to make certain arrangements for the reception of Lord Chetwynde, who was expected from India

at no very distant date. She did not as yet know the time of his probable arrival; but when she had learned it she herself would come to Chetwynde Castle to receive him; but until that time she would stay away. The place where she was staying just at present was particularly healthy. It was a small village on the coast of Brittany, and Lady Chetwynde was anxious to defer her return to the latest possible moment. Such was the information which Hilda condescended to give to the servants, who received the news with unfeigned delight, for they all dearly loved that gentle girl, whose presence at Chetwynde had formerly brightened the whole house, and with whose deep grief over her last bereavement they had all most sincerely sympathized.

Hilda had many things to do. Her first duty was to call on Mrs. Hart. The poor old housekeeper still continued in a miserable condition, hovering, apparently, between life and death, and only conscious at intervals of what was going on around her. That consciousness was not strong enough to make her miss the presence of Zillah, nor did her faculties, even in her most lucid intervals, seem to be fully at work. Her memory did not appear to suggest at any time those sad events which had brought her down to this. It was only at times that she exhibited any recollection of the past, and that was confined altogether to "Guy;" to him whom in whispered words she called "her boy." Mrs. Hart was not at all neglected. Susan, who had once been the upper house-maid, had of late filled the place of housekeeper, which she could easily do, as the family was away, and the duties were light. She also, with her sister Mary, who was the under house-maid, was assiduous in watching at the bedside of the poor old creature, who lay there hovering between life and death. Nothing, indeed, could exceed the kindness and tenderness of these two humble but noble-hearted girls; and even if Zillah herself could have been brought to that bedside the poor sufferer could not have met with more compassionate affection, and certainly could not have found such careful nursing.

Hilda visited Mrs. Hart, and exhibited such tenderness of feeling that both Susan and Mary were touched by it. They knew that Mrs. Hart had never loved her, but it seemed now as if Hilda had forgotten all that former coldness, and was herself inspired by nothing but the tenderest concern. But Hilda had much to attend to, and after about half an hour she left the room to look after those more important matters for which she had come.

What her errand was the servants soon found out. It was nothing less than a complete change in the household. That household had never been large, for the late Earl had been forced by his circumstances to be economical. He never entertained company, and was satisfied with keeping the place, inside and outside, in an ordinary state of neatness."

The servants who now remained may easily be mentioned. Mathilde had gone away. Mrs. Hart lay on a sick-bed. There was Susan, the upper house-maid, and Mary, her sister, the under house-maid. There was Roberts, who had been the late Earl's valet, a smart, active young man, who was well known to have a weakness for Susan; there was the cook, Martha, a formidable personage, who considered herself the most important member of that household; and besides these there were the coachman and the groom. These composed the entire establishment. It was for the sake of getting rid of these, in as quiet and inoffensive a way as possible, that Hilda had now come; and toward evening she began her work by sending for Roberts.

"Roberts," said she, with dignity, as that very respectable person made his appearance, carrying in his face the consciousness of one who had possessed the late Earl's confidence, "I am intrusted with a commission from her ladyship to you. Lord Chetwynde is coming home, and great changes are going to be made here. But her ladyship can not forget the old household; and she told me to mention to you how grateful she felt to you for all your unwearied care and assiduity in your attendance upon your late master, especially through his long and painful illness; and she is most anxious to know in what way she can be of service to you. Her ladyship has heard Mathilde speak of an understanding which exists between you and Susan, the upper house-maid; and she is in hopes that she may be able to further your views in the way of settling yourself; and so she wished me to find out whether you had formed any plans, and what they were."

"It's like her ladyship's thoughtfulness and consideration," said Roberts, gratefully, "to think of the likes of me. I'm sure I did nothing for my lord beyond what it were my bounden dooty to do; and a pleasanter and affabler spoken gentleman than his lordship were nobody need ever want to see. I never expect to meet with such another. As to Susan and me," continued Roberts, looking sheepish, "we was a-thinkin' of a public, when so be as we could see our way to it."

"Where were you thinking of taking one?"

"Well, miss, you see I'm a Westmorelandshire man; and somehow I've a hankerin' after the old place."

"And you're quite right, Roberts," said Hilda, in an encouraging tone. "A man is always happier in his native place among his own people. Have you heard of an opening there?"

Roberts, at this, looked more sheepish still, and did not answer until Hilda had repeated her question.

"Well, to be plain with you, miss," said he, "I had a letter this very week from my brother, telling me of a public in Keswick as was for sale—good-will, stock, and all, and a capital situation for business—towerists the whole summer through, and a little somethin' a-doin' in winter. Susan and me was a-regrettin' the limitation of our means, miss."

"That seems a capital opening, Roberts," said Hilda, very graciously. "It would be a pity to lose it. What is the price?"

"Well, miss, it's a pretty penny, but it's the stand makes it, miss—right on the shores of the lake—boats to let at all hours, inquire within. They are a-askin' five hundred pound, miss."

"Is that unreasonable?"

"Situation considered, on the contrary, miss; and Susan and me has two hundred pound between us in the savings-bank. My lord was a generous master. Now if her ladyship would lend me the extry money I'd pay her back as fast as I made it."

"There is no necessity for that," said Hilda.

"Three hundred pounds happens to be the very sum which her ladyship mentioned to me. So now I commission you in her name to make all the necessary arrangements with your brother; or, better still, go at once yourself—a man can always arrange these matters more satisfactorily himself—and I will let you have the money in three days, with Lady Chetwynde's best wishes for the success of your undertaking; and we will see," she added, with a smile, "if we can not get pretty Susan a wedding-dress, and any thing else she may need. Before a week is over you shall be mine host of the Keswick Inn. And now," she concluded, gayly, "go and make your arrangements with Susan, and don't let any foolish bashfulness on her part prevent you from hastening matters. It would not do for you to let this chance slip through your fingers. I will see that she is ready. Her ladyship has something for her too, and will not let her go to you empty-handed."

"I never, never can thank her ladyship nor you enough," said Roberts, "for what you have done for me this day! Might I make so bold as to write a letter to her ladyship, to offer her my respectful dooty?"

"Yes, Roberts—do so, and give me the letter. I shall be writing to-night, and will inclose it. By-the-by, are not Mary and Susan sisters?"

"They be, miss—sisters and orphelins."

"Well, then," said she, "see that you do not take more than you are entitled to; for though her ladyship lets you carry Susan off, you must not cast covetous eyes on Mary too; for though I allow she would make a very pretty little bar-maid, she is a particularly good house-maid, and we can't spare her."

Roberts grinned from ear to ear.

"I can't pretend to manage the women, miss," said he; "you must speak to Mary;" and then, with a low bow, Roberts withdrew.

Hilda gave a sigh of relief. "There are three disposed of," she murmured. "This is a fair beginning."

On the following day she gave Roberts a check for the money, drawn by *Zillah Chetwynde*. Waving off his thanks, she dismissed him, and sent for the cook. That functionary quickly appeared. She was short of stature, large of bulk, red of face, fluent of speech, hasty of temper—*au reste*, she was a good cook and faithful servant. She bobbed to Hilda on entering, and, closing the door, stood with folded arms and belligerent aspect, like a porcupine armed for defense on the slightest appearance of hostilities.

"Good-morning, Martha," said Hilda, with great suavity. "I hope your rheumatism has not been troubling you since the warm weather set in?"

Martha bobbed with a more mollified air.

"Which, exceptin' the elber jints, where it's settled, likewise the knee jints—savin' of your presence, miss—it's the same; for to go down on my bended knees, miss, it's what I couldn't do, not if you was to give me a thousand-pun note in my blessed hand, and my Easter dooty not bein' able to perform, miss, which it be the first time it ever wor the case; an' it owing to the rheumatis; otherwise I am better, miss, and thank you kindly."

"Her ladyship is very sorry," continued Hilda. "She is unable to return herself just yet, but she has asked me to attend to several matters for her, and one of them is connected with you, Martha. She has received a letter from his lordship stating that he was bringing with him a staff of servants, and among them a French cook."

Here Martha assumed the porcupine again, with every quill on end; but she said nothing, though Hilda paused for an instant. Martha wished to commit Miss Krieff to a proposition, that she might have the glory of rejecting it with scorn. So Hilda went on:

"Your mistress was afraid that you might not care about taking the place of under-cook where you have been head, and as she was anxious to avoid hurting your feelings in any way, she wished me to tell you of this beforehand."

Another moment and the apoplexy which had been threatening since the moment when "under-cook" had been mentioned would have been a fact, but luckily for Martha her overcharged feelings here broke forth with accents of bitterest scorn:

"Which she's *very* kind. Hunder-cook, indeed! which it's what I never abore yet, and never will abear. I've lived at Chetwyn this twenty year, gurl and woman, and hopes as I 'ave done my dooty and giv satisfaction, which my lord were a gentleman, an' found no fault with his wittles, but ate them like a Christian and a nobleman, a-thankin' the Lord, and a-sayin', 'I never asks to see a tidier or a 'olesomer dinner than Martha sends, which she's to be depended on as never bein' raw nor yet done to rags;' an' now when, as you may say, gettin' on in years, though not that old neither as to be dependent or wantin' in sperrit, to have a French cook set over me a talkin' furrin languidgis and a cookin' up goodness ony knows what messes as 'ud pison a Christian stomach to as much as look at, and a horderin' about Marthar here and Marthar there, it's what I can't consent to put up with, and nobody as wasn't a mean spereted creetur could expect it of me, which it's not as I wish to speak disrespectful of her ladyship, which I considers a lady and as allers treated me as sich, only expectin' to hend my days in Chetwyn it's come sudden like; but thanks to the blessed saints, which I 'ave put by as will keep me from the wukkus and a charge on nobody; and I'd like to give warnin', if you please, miss, and if so be as I could leave before monseer arrive."

Here Martha paused, not from lack of material, but from sheer want of breath. She would have been invincible in conversation but for that fatal constitutional infirmity—shortness of breath. This brought her to a pause in the full flow of her eloquence.

Hilda took advantage of the lull.

"Your mistress," said she, "feared that you would feel as you do on the subject, and her instructions to me were these: 'Try and keep Martha if you possibly can—we shall not easily replace her; but if she seems to fear that this new French cook may be domineering'" (fresh and alarming symptoms of apoplexy), "'and may make it uncomfortable for her, we must think of her instead of ourselves. She has been too faithful a servant to allow her to be trampled upon now; and if you find that she will not really consent to stop, you must get her a good place—'"

"Which, if you please, mum," said Martha, interrupting her excitedly, "we won't talk about

a place—it is utter-ly useless, and I might be forgittin' myself; but I never thought," she continued, brushing away a hasty tear, "as it was Master Guy, meaning my lord, as would send old Martha away."

"Oh, I am sure he did not mean to do that," said Hilda, kindly; "but gentlemen have not much consideration, you know, and he is accustomed to French cookery." The softer mood vanished at the hated name.

"And he'll never grow to be the man his father were," said she, excitedly, "on them furrin gimcracks and kickshaws as wouldn't nourish a babby, let alone a full-growed man, and 'e a Henglishman. But it's furrin parts as does it. I never approved of the harmy."

"Her ladyship told me," said Hilda, with her usual placidity, and without taking any notice of the excited feeling of the other, "that if you insisted on going I was to give you twenty pounds, with her kind regards, to buy some remembrance."

"Which she's very kind," rejoined Martha, rather quickly, and with some degree of asperity; "and if you'll give her my grateful dooty, I'd like to leave as soon as may be."

"Well, if you are anxious to do so, I suppose you can. What kitchen-maids are there?"

"Well, miss," said Martha, with dignity, yet severity, "sich drabs of girls as I 'ave 'ad would 'ave prevoked a saint, and mayhap I was a little hasty; but takin' up a sauce-pan, and findin' it that dirty as were scandlus to be'old, I throwed the water as were hin it over 'er, and the sauce-pan with it, an' she declared she'd go, which as the 'ousekeeper bein' in bed, as you know, miss, an' there likely to remain for hevermore, she did, an' good riddance to her, say I—ungrateful hussy as had jist got her wages the day before, and 'ad a comfortable 'ome."

"It does not matter. I suppose the French cook will bring his own subordinates."

"Wery like, miss," said Martha, sharply. "I leave this very day. Good-mornin', miss."

"Oh no; don't be in such a hurry," said Hilda. "You have a week before you. Let me see you before evening, so that I may give you what your mistress has sent."

Martha sullenly assented, and withdrew.

The most difficult part of Hilda's business had thus been quietly accomplished. Nothing now remained but to see the coachman and groom, each of whom she graciously dismissed with a handsome present. She told them, however, to remain for about a week, until their successors might arrive. The large present which the liberality of Lady Chetwynde had given them enabled them to bear their lot with patience, and even pleasure.

After a week Gualtier came up to Chetwynde Castle. He had been away to London, and brought word to Hilda that some of the new servants were expected in a few days. It was soon known to Roberts, Susan, and Mary that Gualtier had been made steward by Lady Chetwynde. He took possession of one of the rooms, and at once entered upon the duties of this office. On the day of his arrival Hilda left, saying to the remaining servants that she would never come back again, as she intended to live in the south of France. She shook hands with each of them very graciously, making each one a present in her own name, and accompanying it with a neat little speech. She had never been popular among them; but now the thought that they would never see her again, together, perhaps, with the very handsome presents which she had made, and her very kind words, affected them deeply, and they showed some considerable feeling.

Under such circumstances Hilda took her departure from Chetwynde Castle, leaving Gualtier in charge. In a few days the new servants arrived, and those of the old ones who had thus far remained now took their departure. The household was entirely remodeled. The new ones took up their places; and there was not one single person there who knew any thing whatever about the late Earl, or Hilda, or Gualtier. The old ones were scattered abroad, and it was not within the bounds of ordinary possibility that any of them would ever come near the place.

In thus remodeling the household it was somewhat enlarged. There was the new housekeeper, a staid, matronly, respectable-looking woman; three house-maids, who had formerly lived in the north of England; a coachman, who had never before been out of Kent; a butler, who had formerly served in a Scotch family; two footmen, one of whom had served in Yorkshire, and the other in Cornwall; two grooms, who had been bred in Yorkshire; a cook, who had hitherto passed all her life in London; and three kitchen-maids, who also had served in that city. Thus the household was altogether new, and had been carefully collected by Gualtier with a view rather to the place from which they had come than to any great excellence on the part of any of them. For so large a place it was but a small number, but it was larger than the household which had been dismissed, and they soon settled down into their places.

One only was left of the old number. This was Mrs. Hart. But she lay on her sick-bed, and Hilda looked upon her as one whose life was doomed. Had any thought of her possible recovery entered her mind, she would have contrived in some way to get rid of her. In spite of her illness, she did not lack attention; for the new housekeeper attached herself to her, and gave her the kindliest care and watchful sympathy.

Last of all, so complete was Hilda's precautions in view of possible future difficulties, that when Gualtier came as the new steward, he came under a new name, and was known to the household as *Mr. M'Kenzie.*

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE LADY OF THE CASTLE.

The new household had been led to expect the arrival of Lady Chetwynde at any moment. They understood that the old household had not given satisfaction, that after the death of the late Earl Lady Chetwynde had gone away to recruit her health, and, now that she was better, she had determined to make a complete change. When she herself arrived other changes would be made. This much Gualtier managed to communicate to them, so as to give them some tangible idea of the affairs of the family and prevent idle conjecture. He let them know, also, that Lord Chetwynde was in India, and might come

home at any moment, though his engagements there were so important that it might be impossible for him to leave.

After a few days Lady Chetwynde arrived at the Castle, and was greeted with respectful curiosity by all within the house. Her cold and aristocratic bearing half repelled them, half excited their admiration. She was very beautiful, and her high breeding was evident in her manner; but there was about her such frigidity and such loftiness of demeanor that it repelled those who would have been willing to give her their love. She brought a maid with her who had only been engaged a short time previously; and it was soon known that the maid stood in great awe of her mistress, who was haughty and exacting, and who shut herself off altogether from any of those attempts at respectful sympathy which some kind-hearted lady's-maids might be inclined to show. The whole household soon shared in this feeling; for the lady of the Castle showed herself rigid in her requirements of duty and strict in her rule, while, at the same time, she made her appearance but seldom. She never visited Mrs. Hart, but once or twice made some cold inquiries about her of the housekeeper. She also gave out that she would not receive any visitors—a precautionary measure that was not greatly needed; for Chetwynde Castle was remote from the seats of the county families, and any changes there would not be known among them for some time.

The lady of the Castle spent the greater part of her time in her boudoir, alone, never tolerating the presence of even her maid except when it was absolutely necessary, but requiring her to be always near in case of any need for her presence arising. The maid attributed this strange seclusion to the effects of grief over her recent bereavement, or perhaps anxiety about her husband; while the other servants soon began to conjecture that her husband's absence arose from some quarrel with a wife whose haughty and imperious demeanor they all had occasion to feel.

It was thus, then, that Hilda had entered upon her new and perilous position, to attain to which she had plotted so deeply and dared so much. Now that she had attained it, there was not an hour, not a moment of the day, in which she did not pay some penalty for the past by a thousand anxieties. To look forward to such a thing as this was one thing; but to be here, where she had so often longed to be, was quite another thing. It was the hackneyed fable of Damocles with the sword over his head over again. She was standing on treacherous ground, which at any moment might give way beneath her feet and plunge her in an abyss of ruin. To live thus face to face with possible destruction, to stare death in the face every day, was not a thing conducive either to mildness or to tenderness in any nature, much less in one like hers.

In that boudoir where she spent so much of her time, while her maid wondered how she employed herself, her occupation consisted of but one thing. It was the examination of papers, followed by deep thought over the result of that examination. Every mail brought to her address newspapers both from home and abroad. Among the latter were a number of Indian papers, published in various places, including some that were printed in remote towns in the north. There were the Delhi *Gazette*, the Allahabad *News*, and the Lahore *Journal*, all of which were most diligently scanned by her. Next to these were the *Times* and the *Army and Navy Gazette*. No other papers or books, or prints of any kind, had any interest in her eyes.

It was natural that her thoughts should thus refer to India. All her plans had succeeded, as far as she could know, and, finally, she had remodeled the household at Chetwynde in such a way that not one remained who could by any possibility know about the previous inmates. She was here as Lady Chetwynde, the lady of Chetwynde Castle, ruler over a great estate, mistress of a place that might have excited the envy of any one in England, looked up to with awful reverence by her dependents, and in the possession of every luxury that wealth could supply. But still the sword was suspended over her head, and by a single hair—a sword that at any moment might fall. What could she know about the intentions of Lord Chetwynde all this time? What were his plans or purposes? Was it not possible, in spite of her firmly expressed convictions to the contrary, that he might come back again to England? And then what? Then—ah! that was the thing beyond which it was difficult for her imagination to go—the crisis beyond which it was impossible to tell what the future might unfold. It was a moment which she was ever forced to anticipate in her thoughts, against which she had always to arm herself, so as to be not taken at unawares.

She had thrown herself thus boldly into Chetwynde Castle, into the very centre of that possible danger which lay before her. But was it necessary to run so great a risk? Could she not at least have gone to Pomeroy Court, and taken up her abode there? Would not this also have been a very natural thing for the daughter of General Pomeroy? It would, indeed, be natural, and it might give many advantages. In the first place, there would be no possibility that Lord Chetwynde, even if he did return from India, would ever seek her out there. She might communicate with him by means of those letters which for years he had received. She might receive his answers, and make known to him whatever she chose, without being compelled to see him face to face. By such a course she might gain what she wished without endangering her safety.

All this had occurred to her long before, and she had regarded it in all its bearings. Nevertheless, she had decided against it, and had chosen rather to encounter the risk of her present action. It was from a certain profound insight into the future. She thought that it was best for Lady Chetwynde to go to Chetwynde Castle, not to Pomeroy Court. By such an act scandal would be avoided. If Lord Chetwynde did not come, well and good; if he did, why then he must be met face to face; and in such an event she trusted to her own genius to bring her out of so frightful a crisis. That meeting would bring with it much risk and many dangers; but it would also bring its own peculiar benefits. If it were once successfully encountered her position would be insured, and the fear of future danger would vanish. For that reason, if for no other, she determined to go to Chetwynde Castle, run every risk, and meet her fate.

While Hilda was thus haughty and repellent to her servants, there was one to whom she was accessible; and this was the new steward, Gualtier, with whom she had frequent communications about the business of the estate. Their interviews generally took place in that morning-room which has already been described, and which was so peculiarly situated that no prying servants could easily watch them or overhear their conversation, if they were careful.

One day, after she had dined, she went to this room, and ordered her maid to tell the steward that she would like to see him. She had that day received a number of Indian papers, over which she had passed many hours; for there was something in one of them which seemed to excite her interest, and certainly gave occupation to all her mind.

Gualtier was prompt to obey the mandate. In a few minutes after Hilda had entered the room he made his appearance, and bowed in silence. Hilda motioned him to a chair, in which he seated himself. The intercourse of these two had now become remarkable for this, that their attitude toward one another had undergone a change corresponding to their apparent positions. Hilda was Lady Chetwynde, and seemed in reality, even in her inmost soul, to feel herself to be so. She had insensibly caught that grand air which so lofty a position might be supposed to give; and it was quite as much her own feeling as any power of consummate acting which made her carry out her part so well. A lofty and dignified demeanor toward the rest of the household might have been but the ordinary act of one who was playing a part; but in Hilda this demeanor extended itself even to Gualtier, toward whom she exhibited the same air of conscious social superiority which she might have shown had she been in reality all that she pretended to be. Gualtier, on his part, was equally singular. He seemed quietly to accept her position as a true and valid one, and that, too, not only before the servants, when it would have been very natural for him to do so, but even when they were alone. This, however, was not so difficult for him, as he had always been in the habit of regarding her as his social superior; yet still, considering the confidences which existed between this extraordinary pair, it was certainly strange that he should have preserved with such constancy his attitude of meek subservience. Here, at Chetwynde, he addressed her as the steward of the estates should have done; and even when discussing the most delicate matters his tone and demeanor corresponded with his office.

On this occasion he began with some intelligence about the state of the north wall, which bounded the park. Hilda listened wearily till he had finished. Then she abruptly brought forward all that was in her thoughts. Before doing so, however, she went to the door to see that no one was present and listening there, as she had herself once listened. To those who were at all on their guard there was no danger. The morning-room was only approached by a long, narrow hall, in which no one could come without being detected, if any one in the room chose to watch. Hilda now took her seat on a chair from which she could look up the hall, and thus, feeling secure from observation or from listeners, she began, in a low voice:

"I received the Indian papers to-day."

"I was aware of that, my lady," said Gualtier, respectfully. "Did you see any thing in them of importance?"

"Nothing certain, but something sufficient to excite concern."

"About Lord Chetwynde?"

"Yes."

"He can not be coming home, surely?" said Gualtier, interrogatively.

"I'm afraid that he is."

Gualtier looked serious.

"I thought," said he, "my lady, that you had nearly given up all expectation of seeing him for some time to come."

"I have never yet given up those expectations. I have all along thought it possible, though not probable; and so I have always watched all the papers to see if he had left his station."

"I suppose he would not write about his intentions."

"To whom could he think of writing?" asked Hilda, with a half sneer.

"I thought that perhaps he might write to Lady Chetwynde."

"Lady Chetwynde's letters to him have been of such a character that it is not very likely that he will ever write to her again, except under the pressure of urgent necessity."

"Have you seen any thing in particular in any of the papers about him?" asked Gualtier, after some silence.

"Yes. In one. It is the Allahabad *News*. The paragraph happened to catch my eye by the merest accident, I think. There is nothing about it in any of the other Indian papers. See; I will show it to you."

And Hilda, drawing a newspaper from her pocket, unfolded it, and pointing to a place in one of the inside columns, she handed it to Gualtier. He took it with a bow, and read the following:

"PERSONAL.—We regret to learn that Lord Chetwynde has recently resigned his position as Resident at Lahore. The recent death of his father, the late Earl of Chetwynde, and the large interests which demand his personal attention, are assigned as the causes for this step. His departure for England will leave a vacancy in our Anglo-Indian service which will not easily be filled. Lord Chetwynde's career in this important part of the empire has been so brilliant, that it is a matter for sincere regret that he is prevented, by any cause, from remaining here. In the late war he made his name conspicuous by his valor and consummate military genius. In the siege of Delhi he won laurels which will place his name high on the roll of those whom England loves to honor. Afterward, in the operations against Tantia Toupi, his bold exploits will not soon be forgotten. His appointment to the Residency at Lahore was made only a few months since; yet in that short time he has shown an administrative talent which, without any reflection on our other able officials, we may safely pronounce to be very rare in the departments of our civil service. He is but a young man yet; but seldom has it happened that one so young has exhibited such mature intellectual powers, and such firm decision in the management of the most delicate cases. A gallant soldier, a wise ruler, and a genial friend, Lord Chetwynde will be missed in all those departments of public and private life of which he has been so conspicuous an ornament. As journalists, we wish to record this estimate of his virtues and his genius, and we feel sure that it will be shared by all who have been in any way familiar with the career of this distinguished gentleman. For the rest, we wish him most cordially a prosperous voyage home; and we anticipate for him in the mother country a career corresponding with his illustrious rank, and commensurate with the brilliant opening which he made in this country during those recent 'times which tried men's souls.'"

Gualtier read this paragraph over twice, and

then sat for some time in thought. At last he looked up at Hilda, who had all this time been intently watching him.

"That's bad," exclaimed he, and said no more.

"It seems that, after all, he is coming," said Hilda.

"Have you seen his name in any of the lists of passengers?"

"No."

"Then he has not left yet."

"Perhaps not; but still I can not trust to that altogether. His name may be omitted."

"Would such a name as his be likely to be omitted?"

"I suppose not; and so he can not have left India as yet—unless, indeed, he has come under an assumed name."

"An assumed name! Would he be capable of that? And if he were, what motive could he have?"

"Ah! there I am unable to find an answer. I'm afraid I have been judging of Lord Chetwynde by that." And Hilda pointed to the portrait of the young officer, Guy Molyneux, over the fire-place. "Years have changed him, and I have not made allowance for the years. I think now that this Lord Chetwynde must be very different from that Guy Molyneux. This hero of Delhi; this assailant of Tantia Toupi; this dashing officer, who is at once brilliant in the field and in the social circle; this man who, in addition to all this, has proved himself to be a wise ruler, with a 'genius for administration,' is a man who, I confess, dawns upon me so suddenly that it gives me a shock. I have been thinking of an innocent boy. I find that this boy has grown to be a great, brave, wise, strong man! There, I think, is the first mistake that I have made."

Hilda's words were full of truth and meaning. Gualtier felt that meaning.

"You have an alternative still," said he.

"What is that?"

"You need not stay here."

"What! Run away from him—in fear?" said Hilda, scornfully. "Run away from this place before I even know for certain that he is coming? That, at least, I will not do."

"There is Pomeroy Court," hinted Gualtier.

"No. Chetwynde Castle is my only home. I live here, or—nowhere. If I have to encounter him, it shall be face to face, and here in this house—perhaps in this room. Had I seen this a month ago my decision might have been different, though I don't know even that; but now, under any circumstances, it is too late to go back, or to swerve by one hair's breadth from the path which I have laid down for myself. It is well that I have seen all this"—and she pointed to the newspaper—"for it has given me a new view of the man. I shall not be so likely to underrate him now; and being forewarned I will be forearmed."

"There is still the probability," said Gualtier, thoughtfully, "that he may not come to England."

"There is a possibility," said Hilda, "certainly; but it is not probable, after so decided an act performed by one in so important a position, that he will remain in India. For why should he remain there? What could possibly cause him to resign, except the fixed intention of coming home? No; there can not be the slightest doubt that his coming home is as certain as the dawn of to-morrow. What I wonder at, however, is, that he should delay; I should have expected to hear of his arrival in London. Yet that can not be, for his name is not down at all; and if he had come, surely a name like his could not by any possibility be omitted. No, he can not have come just yet. But he will, no doubt, come in the next steamer."

"There is yet another chance," said Gualtier.

"What is that?"

"He may come to England, and yet not come here to Chetwynde."

"I have thought of that too," said Hilda, "and used to think of it as very probable indeed; but now a ray of light has been let into my mind, and I see what manner of man he is. That boy"—and she again pointed to the portrait—"was the one who misled me. Such a one as he might have been so animated by hate that he might keep away so as not to be forced to see his detested wife. But this man is different. This soldier, this ruler, this mature man—who or what is his wife, hated though she be, or what is she to him in any way, that *she* should prove the slightest obstacle in the path of one like *him*? He would meet her as her lord and master, and brush her away as he would a moth."

"You draw this absent man in grand colors," said Gualtier. "Perhaps, my lady, your imagination is carrying you away. But if he is all this that you say, how can you venture to meet him? Will you risk being thus 'brushed away,' as you say, 'like a moth?'"

Hilda's eyes lighted up.

"I am not one who can be brushed away," said she, calmly; "and, therefore, whatever he is, and whenever he comes, I will be prepared to meet him."

Hilda's tone was so firm and decided that it left no room for further argument or remonstrance. Nor did Gualtier attempt any. Some conversation followed, and he soon took his departure.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FACE TO FACE.

Some time passed away after the conversation related in the last chapter, and one evening Hilda was in her boudoir alone, as usual. She was somewhat paler, more nervous, and less calm than she had been a few months previously. Her usual stealthy air had now developed into one of wary watchfulness, and the quiet noiselessness of her actions, her manner, and her movements had become intensified into a habit of motionless repose, accompanied by frequent fits of deep abstraction. On the present occasion she was reclining on her couch, with her hand shading her eyes. She had been lying thus for some time, lost in thought, and occasionally rousing herself sharply from her meditations to look around her with her watchful and suspicious eyes. In this attitude she remained till evening came, and then, with the twilight, she sank into a deep abstraction, one so deep that she could not readily rouse herself.

It was with a great start, therefore, that she rose to her feet as a sudden noise struck her ears. It was the noise of a carriage moving

rapidly up through the avenue toward the house. For a carriage to come to Chetwynde Castle at any time was a most unusual thing; but for one to come after dark was a thing unheard of. At once there came to Hilda a thought like lightning as to who it might be that thus drove up; the thought was momentous and overwhelming: it might have been sufficient to have destroyed all courage and all presence of mind had her nerves been, by the slightest degree, less strong. But as it was, her nerve sustained her, and her courage did not falter for one single instant. With a calm face and firm step she advanced to the window. With a steady hand she drew the curtains aside and looked out. Little could be seen amidst the gloom at first; but at length, as she gazed, she was able to distinguish the dim outline of a carriage, as it emerged from the shadows of the avenue and drove up to the chief door.

Then she stepped back toward the door of her boudoir, and listened, but nothing could be heard. She then lighted two lamps, and, turning to a cheval-glass at one end of her room, she put one lamp on each side, so that the light might strike on her to the best advantage, and then scrutinized herself with a steady and critical glance. Thus she stood for a long time, watchful and motionless, actuated by a motive far different from any thing like vanity; and if she received gratification from a survey of herself, it was any thing but gratified pride. It was a deeper motive than girlish curiosity that inspired such stern self-inspection; and it was a stronger feeling than vanity that resulted from it. It was something more than things like these which made her, at so dread a moment, look so anxiously at her image in the glass.

As she stood there a tap came at the door.

"Come in," said Hilda, in her usual calm tone, turning as she spoke to face the door.

It was the maid.

"My lady," said she, "his lordship has just arrived."

To her, at that moment, such intelligence could have been nothing less than tremendous. It told her that the crisis of her life had come; and to meet it was inevitable, whatever the result might be. He had come. He, the one whom she must face; not the crude boy, but the man, tried in battle and in danger and in judgment, in the camp and in the court; the man who she now knew well was not surpassed by many men among that haughty race to which he belonged. This man was accustomed to face guilt and fear; he had learned to read the soul; he had become familiar with all that the face may make known of the secret terrors of conscience. And how could she meet the calm eyes of one who found her here in such a relation toward him? Yet all this she had weighed before in her mind; she was not unprepared. The hour and the man had come. She was found ready.

She regarded the maid for a few moments in silence. At last she spoke.

"Very well," she said, coldly, and without any perceptible emotion of any kind. "I will go down to meet his lordship."

His lordship has just arrived! The words had been spoken, and the speaker had departed, but the words still echoed and re-echoed through the soul of the hearer. What might this involve? and what would be the end of this arrival?

Suddenly she stepped to the door and called the maid.

"Has any one accompanied his lordship?"

"No, my lady."

"He came alone?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Did Mr. M'Kenzie see him?"

"No, my lady. He is not in the house."

Hilda closed the door, went back, and again stood before the mirror. Some time elapsed as she stood there regarding herself, with strange thoughts passing through her mind. She did not find it necessary, however, to make any alterations in her appearance. She did not change one fold in her attire, or vary one hair of her head from its place. It was as though this present dress and this present appearance had been long ago decided upon by her for just such a meeting as this. Whether she had anticipated such a meeting so suddenly—whether she was amazed or not—whether she was at all taken by surprise or not, could not appear in any way from her action or her demeanor. In the face of so terrible a crisis, whose full meaning and import she must have felt profoundly, she stood there, calm and self-contained, with the self-poise of one who has been long prepared, and who, when the hour big with fate at last may come, is not overwhelmed, but rises with the occasion, goes forth to the encounter, and prepares to contend with destiny.

It was, perhaps, about half an hour before Hilda went down. She went with a steady step and a calm face down the long corridor, down the great stairway, through the chief hall, and at length entered the drawing-room.

On entering she saw a tall man standing there, with his back turned toward the door, looking up at a portrait of the late Earl. So intently was he occupied that he did not hear her entering; but a slight noise, made by a chair as she passed it, startled him, and he turned and looked at her, disclosing to her curious yet apprehensive gaze the full features and figure of the new Lord Chetwynde. On that instant, as he turned and faced her, she took in his whole face and mien and stature. She saw a broad, intellectual brow, covered with dark clustering hair; a face bronzed by the suns of India and the exposure of the campaign, the lower part of which was hidden by a heavy beard and mustache; and a tall, erect, stalwart frame, with the unmistakable air of a soldier in every outline. His mien had in it a certain indescribable grace of high breeding, and the commanding air of one accustomed to be the ruler of men. His eyes were dark, and full of quiet but resistless power; and they beamed upon her lustrously, yet gloomily, and with a piercing glance of scrutiny from under his dark brows. His face bore the impress of a sadness deeper than that which is usually seen—sadness that had reigned there long—a sadness, too, which had given to that face a more sombre cast than common, from some grief which had been added to former ones. It was but for a moment that he looked at her, and then he bowed with grave courtesy. Hilda also bowed without a word, and then waited for Lord Chetwynde to speak.

But Lord Chetwynde did not speak for some time. His earnest eyes were still fixed upon the one before him, and though it might have been rudeness, yet it was excusable, from the weight which lay on his soul.

"HILDA STOOD THERE, CALM, WATCHFUL, AND EXPECTANT."

Hilda, for her part, stood there, calm, watchful, and expectant. That slender and graceful figure, with its simple and elegant dress, which set off to the utmost the perfection of her form, looked certainly unlike the ungrown girl whom Lord Chetwynde had seen years before. Still more unlike was the face. Pale, with delicate, transparent skin, it was not so dark as that face which had dwelt in his memory. Her eyes did not seem so wild and staring as those of the imp whom he had married; but deep, dark, and strong in their gaze, as they looked back steadily into his. The hair was now no longer disordered, but enfolded in its dark, voluminous

masses, so as to set off to the best advantage the well-shaped head, and slender, beautifully rounded neck. The one whom he remembered had been hideous; this one was beautiful. But the beauty that he saw was, nevertheless, hard, cold, and repellent. For Hilda, in her beauty and grace and intellectual subtilty, stood there watchful and vigilant, like a keen fencer on guard, waiting to see what the first spoken word might disclose; waiting to see what that grand lordly face, with its air of command, its repressed grief, its deep piercing eyes, might shadow forth.

A singular meeting; but Lord Chetwynde seemed to think it natural enough, and after a few moments he remarked, in a quiet voice:

"Lady Chetwynde, the morning-room will be more suitable for the interview which I wish, and, if you have no objection, we will go there."

At the sound of these words a great revulsion took place in Hilda's feelings, and a sense of triumph succeeded to that intense anxiety which for so long a time had consumed her. The sound of that name by which he had addressed her had shown her at once that the worst part of this crisis had passed away. He had seen her. He had scrutinized her with those eyes which seemed to read her soul, and the end was that he had taken her for what she professed to be. He had called her "Lady Chetwynde!" After this what more was there which could excite fear? Was not her whole future now secured by the utterance of those two words? Yet Hilda's self-control was so perfect, and her vigilance so consummate, that no change whatever expressed in her face the immense revolution of feeling within her. Her eyes fell—that was all; and as she bowed her head silently, by that simple gesture which was at once natural and courteous, she effectually concealed her face; so that, even if there had been a change in its expression, it could not have been seen. Yet, after all, the triumph was but instantaneous. It passed away, and soon there came another feeling, vague, indefinable—a premonition of the future—a presentiment of gloom; and though the intensity of the suspense had passed, there still remained a dark anxiety and a fear which were unaccountable.

Lord Chetwynde led the way to the morning-room, and on arriving there he motioned her to a seat. Hilda sat down. He sat opposite in another chair, not far off. On the wall, where each could see it, hung his portrait—the figure of that beardless, boyish, dashing young officer—very different from this matured, strong-souled man; so different, indeed, that it seemed hardly possible that they could be the same.

Lord Chetwynde soon began.

"Lady Chetwynde," said he, again addressing her by that name, and speaking in a firm yet melancholy voice, "it is not often that a husband and a wife meet as you and I do now; but then it is not often that two people become husband and wife as you and I have. I have come from India for the sake of having a full understanding with you. I had, until lately, an idea of coming here under an assumed name, with the wish of sparing you the embarrassment which I supposed that the presence of Lord Chetwynde himself might possibly cause you. In fact, I traveled most of the way home from India under an assumed name with that intent. But before I reached England I concluded that there was no necessity for trying to guard against any embarrassment on your part, and that it would be infinitely better to see you in my own person and talk to you without disguise."

He paused for a moment.

"Had you chosen to come all the way in your own name, my lord," said Hilda, speaking now for the first time, "I should have seen your name in the list of passengers, and should have been better prepared for the honor of your visit."

"Concealment would have been impossible," continued Lord Chetwynde, gloomily, half to himself, and without appearing to have heard Hilda's words, "here, in my home. Though all the old servants are gone, still the old scenes remain; and if I had come here as a stranger I should have shown so deep an interest in my home that I might have excited suspicion. But the whole plan was impossible, and, after all, there was no necessity for it, as I do not see that your feelings have been excited to madness by my appearance. So far, then, all is well. And now to come to the point; and you, I am sure, will be the first to excuse my abruptness in doing so. The unfortunate bond that binds us is painful enough to you. It is enough for me to say that I have come home for two reasons: first, to see my home, possibly for the last time; and secondly, to announce to you the decision at which I have arrived with regard to the position which we shall hereafter occupy toward one another."

Hilda said nothing. Awe was a feeling which was almost unknown to her; but something of that had come over her as, sitting in the presence of this man, she heard him say these words; for he spoke without any particular reference to her, and said them with a grand, authoritative air, with the tone of one accustomed to rule and to dispense justice. In uttering these concluding words it seemed to be his will, his decision, that he was announcing to some inferior being.

"First," he went on to say, "let me remind you of our unhappy betrothal. You were a child, I a boy. Our parents are responsible for that. They meant well. Let us not blame them.

"Then came our marriage by the death-bed of your father. You were excited, and very naturally so. You used bitter words to me then which I have never forgotten. Every taunt and insult which you then uttered has lived in my memory. Why? Not because I am inclined to treasure up wrong. No. Rather because you have taken such extreme pains to keep alive the memory of that event. You will remember that in every one of those letters which you have written to me since I left England there has not been one which has not been filled with innuendoes of the most cutting kind, and insults of the most galling nature. My father loved you. I did not. But could you not, for his sake, have refrained from insult? Why was it necessary to turn what at first was merely coolness into hate and indignation?

"I speak bitterly about those letters of yours. It was those which kept me so long in India. I could not come to see my father because you were here, and I should have to come and see you. I could not give him trouble by letting him know the truth, because he loved you. Thus you kept me away from him and from my home

at a time when
finally, to crown
concealed from m
till it was too la
you wrote that h
of insult and vin
ardly stab, which
wrung by the grie
letter which you
and almost intole
that my father—t
so loved you and
less gentleman, th
ed *you*, and that
inflicted by Provi
made a cunning
for the sake of y
his accomplice; an
ance of Divine ju
of us!"

Deep and low g
wynde's voice as
and low, yet restra
is put over the fe
yet can not hide t
underlies all the w
with intensest heat
dignation seemed t
and withering pow
herself involuntaril
terrific denunciatio

Lord Chetwynde

"Calm yourself,"
your nature. Do
that I, by any poss
nation? Not at all
the first and for the
letters were lying b
breathe one word ab
whom I kept no othe
that, while he loved
love and his trust w
not add to his troub
character of the wom
and bound me fast,
with affection. Th
spare him, and so I
I always spoke of yo
spect, knowing well
self did not deserve
deserved it, and I qu
for his sake. But
reason why I should
speak of these things
you know how your co
timated by one whose
honorable gentlemen.

"Even after his de
wynde, "I might pos
sideration for you, an
used such plain langua
who could take adva
father to give vent to
to one who had never
consideration. Such
Chetwynde, toward m
to be ever forgiven o
will no doubt say, with
forgiveness is not desir

"To your father, I
made a vow that I woul
your happiness. I m

at a time when I was longing to be here; and, finally, to crown your cruelty, you sedulously concealed from me the news of my father's illness till it was too late. He died; and then—then you wrote that hideous letter, that abomination of insult and vindictiveness, that cruel and cowardly stab, which you aimed at a heart already wrung by the grief of bereavement! In the very letter which you wrote to tell me of that sudden and almost intolerable calamity you dared to say that my father—that gentle and noble soul, who so loved you and trusted you—that he, the stainless gentleman, the soul of honor—*he* had cheated *you*, and that his death was the punishment inflicted by Providence for his sin; that he had made a cunning and dishonest plan to get you for the sake of your fortune; that *I* had been his accomplice; and that by his death the vengeance of Divine justice was manifested on both of us!"

Deep and low grew the tones of Lord Chetwynde's voice as he spoke these words—deep and low, yet restrained with that restraint which is put over the feelings by a strong nature, and yet can not hide that consuming passion which underlies all the words, and makes them burn with intensest heat. Here the hot fire of his indignation seemed to be expressed in a blighting and withering power; and Hilda shrank within herself involuntarily in fear, trembling at this terrific denunciation.

Lord Chetwynde made a slight gesture.

"Calm yourself," said he; "you can not help your nature. Do you suppose for one moment that I, by any possibility, can expect an explanation? Not at all. I have mentioned this for the first and for the last time. Even while your letters were lying before me I did not deign to breathe one word about them to my father, from whom I kept no other secret, even though I knew that, while he loved you and trusted you, both his love and his trust were thrown away. I would not add to his troubles by showing him the true character of the woman to whom he had sold me and bound me fast, and whom he looked on with affection. That sorrow I determined to spare him, and so I kept silent. So it was that I always spoke of you with the formulas of respect, knowing well all the time that you yourself did not deserve even that much. But *he* deserved it, and I quenched my own indignation for his sake. But now there is no longer any reason why I should play the hypocrite, and so I speak of these things. I say this simply to let you know how your conduct and character are estimated by one whose opinion is valued by many honorable gentlemen.

"Even after his death," continued Lord Chetwynde, "I might possibly have had some consideration for you, and, perhaps, would not have used such plain language as I now do. But one who could take advantage of the death of my father to give vent to spleen, and to offer insult to one who had never offended her, deserves no consideration. Such conduct as yours, Lady Chetwynde, toward me, has been too atrocious to be ever forgiven or forgotten. To this you will no doubt say, with your usual sneer, that my forgiveness is not desired. I am glad if it is not.

"To your father, Lady Chetwynde, I once made a vow that I would always be careful about your happiness. I made it thoughtlessly, not knowing what I was promising, not in any way understanding its full import. I made it when full of gratitude for an act of his which I regarded only by itself, without thinking of all that was required of me. I made it as a thoughtless boy. But that vow I intend now, as a mature man, to fulfill, most sacredly and solemnly. For I intend to care for your happiness, and that, too, in a way which will be most agreeable to you. I shall thus be able to keep that rash and hasty vow, which I once thought I would never be able to keep. The way in which I intend to keep it is one, Lady Chetwynde, which will insure perfect happiness to one like you; and as you are, no doubt, anxious to know how it is possible for me to do such a thing, I will hasten to inform you.

"The way in which I intend, Lady Chetwynde, to fulfill my vow and secure your perfect happiness is, first of all, by separating myself from you forever. This is the first thing. It is not such an accomplishment of that vow as either your father or mine anticipated; but in your eyes and mine it will be a perfect fulfillment. Fortunate it is for me that the thing which you desire most is also the very thing which I most desire. Your last letter settled a problem which has been troubling me for years.

"This, however, is only part of my decision. I will let you know the rest as briefly as possible. When your father came from India, and made that memorable visit to my father, which has cost us both so dear, Chetwynde was covered with mortgages to the extent of sixty thousand pounds. Your father made an unholy bargain with mine, and in order to secure a protector for you, he gave to my father the money which was needed to disencumber the estate. It was, in fact, your dowry, advanced beforehand.

"The principals in that ill-omened arrangement are both dead. I am no longer a boy, but a man; the last of my line, with no one to consider but myself. An atrocious wrong has been done, unintentionally, to me, and also to you. That wrong I intend to undo, as far as possible. I have long ago decided upon the way. I intend to give back to you this dowry money; and to do so I will break the entail, sell Chetwynde, and let it go to the hands of strangers. My ancient line ends in me. Be it so. I have borne so many bitter griefs that I can bear this with resignation. Never again shall you, Lady Chetwynde, have the power of flinging at me that taunt which you have so often flung. You shall have your money back, to the last farthing, and with interest for the whole time since its advance. In this way I can also best keep my vow to General Pomeroy; for the only mode by which I can secure your happiness is to yield the care of it into your own hands.

"For the present you will have Chetwynde Castle to live in until its sale. Every thing here seems quite adapted to make you happy. You seem to have appropriated it quite to yourself. I can not find one of those faithful old domestics with whom my boyhood was passed. You have surrounded yourself with your own servants. Until your money is paid you will be quite at liberty to live here, or at Pomeroy Court, whichever you prefer. Both are yours now, the Castle as much as Pomeroy Court, as you remarked, with your usual delicacy, in your last letter, since they both represent your own money.

"And now," said Lord Chetwynde, in conclusion, "we understand one another. The time for taunts and sneers, for you, is over. Any letters hereafter that may come to me in your handwriting will be returned unopened. The one aim of my life hereafter shall be to undo, as far as possible, the wrong done to us both by our parents. That can never be all undone; but, at any rate, you may be absolutely certain that you will get back every penny of the money which is so precious to you, with interest. As to my visit here, do not let it disturb you for one moment. I have no intention of making a scene for the benefit of your gaping servants. My business now is solely to see about my father's papers, to examine them, and take away with me those that are of immediate use. While I am here we will meet at the same table, and will be bound by the laws of ordinary courtesy. At all other times we need not be conscious of one another's existence. I trust that you will see the necessity of avoiding any open demonstrations of hatred, or even dislike. Let your feelings be confined to yourself, Lady Chetwynde; and do not make them known to the servants, if you can possibly help it."

Lord Chetwynde seemed to have ended; for he arose and sauntered up to the portrait, which he regarded for some time with fixed attention, and appeared to lose himself in his thoughts. During the remarks which he had been making Hilda had sat looking at the floor. Unable to encounter the stern gaze of the man whom she felt to be her master, she had listened in silence, with downcast eyes. There was nothing for her to say. She therefore did the very best thing that she could do under the circumstances —she said nothing. Nor did she say any thing when he had ended. She saw him absorb himself in regarding his own portrait, and apparently lose himself in his recollections of the past. Of her he seemed to have now no consciousness. She sat looking at him, as his side face was turned toward her, and his eyes fixed on the picture. The noble profile, with its clear-cut features, showed much of the expression of the face—an expression which was stern, yet sad and softened—that face which, just before, had been before her eyes frowning, wrathful, clothed with consuming terrors—a face upon which she could not look, but which now was all mournful and sorrowful. And now, as she gazed, the hard rigidity of her beautiful features relaxed, the sharp glitter of her dark eyes died out, their stony lustre gave place to a soft light, which beamed upon him with wonder, with timid awe—with something which, in any other woman, would have looked like tenderness. She had not been prepared for one like this. In her former ideas of him he had been this boy of the portrait, with his boyish enthusiasm, and his warm, innocent temperament. This idea she had relinquished, and had known that he had changed during the years into the heroic soldier and the calm judge. She had tried to familiarize herself with this new idea, and had succeeded in doing so to a certain extent. But, after all, the reality had been too much for her. She had not been prepared for one like this, nor for such an effect as the sight of him had produced. At this first interview he had overpowered her utterly, and she had sat dumb and motionless before him. All the sneering speeches which she had prepared in anticipation of the meeting were useless. She found no place for them. But there was one result to this interview which affected her still more deeply than this discovery of his moral superiority. The one great danger which she had always feared had passed away. She no longer had that dread fear of discovery which hitherto had harassed her; but in the place of this there suddenly arose another fear—a fear which seemed as terrible as the other, which darkened over her during the course of that scene till its close, and afterward—such an evil as she never before could have thought herself capable of dreading, yet one which she had brought upon herself.

What was that?

His contempt—his hate—his abhorrence—this was the thing which now seemed so terrible to her.

For in the course of that interview a sudden change had come over all her feelings. In spite of her later judgment about him, which she had expressed to Gualtier, there had been in her mind a half contempt for the man whom she had once judged of by his picture only, and whom she recollected as the weak agent in a forced marriage. That paragraph in the Indian paper had certainly caused a great change to take place in her estimate of his character; but, in spite of this, the old contempt still remained, and she had reckoned upon finding beneath the mature man, brave though he was, and even wise though he might be, much of that boy whom she had despised. But all this passed away as a dream, out of which she had a rude awakening. She awoke suddenly to the full reality, to find him a strong, stern, proud man, to whom her own strength was as weakness. While he uttered his grand maledictions against her he seemed to her like a god. He was a mighty being, to whom she looked up from the depths of her soul, half in fear, half in adoration. In her weakness she admired his strength; and in her wily and tortuous subtlety she worshiped this straightforward and upright gentleman, who scorned craft and cunning, and who had sat in stern judgment upon her, to make known to her *his will*.

For some time she sat looking at him as he stood, with her whole nature shaken by these new, these unparalleled emotions, till, finally, with a start, she came to herself, and, rising slowly, she glided out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN EFFORT AT CONCILIATION.

Lord Chetwynde's occupations kept him for the greater part of his time in his father's library, where he busied himself in examining papers. Many of these he read and restored to their places, but some he put aside, in order to take them with him. Of the new steward he took no notice whatever. He considered the dismissal of the old one and the appointment of Gualtier one of those abominable acts which were consistent with all the other acts of that woman whom he supposed to be his wife. Besides, the papers which he sought had reference to the past, and

"HE SOUGHT OUT HIS FATHER'S GRAVE, AND STOOD MUSING THERE."

had no connection with the affairs of the present. In the intervals of his occupation he used to go about the grounds, visiting every one of those well-known places which were associated with his childhood and boyhood. He sought out his father's grave, and stood musing there with feelings which were made up of sadness, mingled with something like reproach for the fearful mistake which his father had made in the allotment of the son's destiny. True, he had been one of the consenting parties; but when he first gave that consent he was little more than a boy, and not at all capable of comprehending the full meaning of such an engagement. His father had ever since solemnly held him to it, and had appealed to his sense of honor in order to make him faithful. But now the father was dead, the son was a mature man, tried in a thousand scenes of difficulty and danger—one who had learned to think for himself, who had gained his manhood by a life of storms, in which of late there had been crowded countless events, each of which had had their weight in the development of his character. They had left him a calm, strong, resolute man—a man of thought and of action—a graduate of the school of Indian affairs—a school which, in times that tried men's souls, never failed to supply men who were equal to every emergency.

At the very outset he had found out the condi-

tion of Mrs. Hart. The sight of his loved nurse, thus prostrated, filled him with grief. The housekeeper who now attended her knew nothing whatever of the cause of her prostration. Lord Chetwynde did not deign to ask any questions of Hilda; but in his anxiety to learn about Mrs. Hart, he sought out the doctor who had attended his father, and from him he learned that Mrs. Hart's illness had been caused by her anxiety about the Earl. The knowledge of this increased, if possible, his own care. He made the closest inquiry as to the way in which she was treated, engaged the doctor to visit her, and doubled the housekeeper's salary on condition that she would be attentive to his beloved nurse. These measures were attended with good results, for under this increased care Mrs. Hart began to show signs of improvement. Whether she would ever again be conscious was yet a question. The doctor considered her mind to be irretrievably affected.

Meanwhile, throughout all these days, Hilda's mind was engrossed with the change which had come over her—a change so startling and so unexpected that it found her totally unprepared to deal with it. They met every day at the dinner-table, and at no other times. Here Lord Chetwynde treated her with scrupulous courtesy; yet beyond the extreme limits of that courtesy she found it impossible to advance. Hilda's manner was most humble and conciliatory. She who all her life had felt defiant of others, or worse, now found herself enthralled and subdued by the spell of this man's presence. Her wiliness, her stealthiness, her constant self-control, were all lost and forgotten. She had now to struggle incessantly against that new tenderness which had sprung up unbidden within her. She caught herself looking forward wistfully every day to the time when she could meet him at the table and hear his voice, which, even in its cold, constrained tones, was enough for her happiness. It was in vain that she reproached and even cursed herself for her weakness. The weakness none the less existed; and all her life seemed now to centre around this man, who hated her. Into a position like this she had never imagined that she could possibly be brought. All her cunning and all her resources were useless here. This man seemed so completely beyond her control that any effort to win him to her seemed useless. He believed her to be his wife, he believed himself bound by honor to secure her happiness, and yet his abhorrence of her was so strong that he never made any effort to gain her for himself. Now Hilda saw with bitterness that she had gone too far, and that her plans and her plots were recoiling upon her own head. They had been too successful. The sin of Lord Chetwynde's wife had in his eyes proved unpardonable.

Hilda's whole life now became a series of alternate struggles against her own heart, and longings after another who was worse than indifferent to her. Her own miserable weakness, so unexpected, and yet so complete and hopeless, filled her at once with anger and dismay. To find all her thoughts both by day and night filled with this one image was at once mortifying and terrible. The very intensity of her feelings, which would not stop short at death itself to gain their object, now made her own sufferings all the greater. Every thing else was forgotten except this one absorbing desire; and her complicated schemes and far-reaching plans were thrust away. They had lost their interest. Henceforth all were reduced to one thought—how to gain Lord Chetwynde to herself.

As long as he staid, something like hope remained; but when he would leave, what hope could there be? Would he not leave her forever? Was not this the strongest desire of his heart? Had he not said so? Every day she watched, with a certain chilling fear at her heart, to see if there were signs of his departure. As day succeeded to day, however, and she found him still remaining, she began to hope that he might possibly have relented somewhat, and that the sentence which he had spoken to her might have become modified by time and further observation of her.

So at the dinner-table she used to sit, looking at him, when his eyes were turned away, with her earnest, devouring gaze, which, as soon as he would look at her again, was turned quickly away with the timidity of a young bashful child. Such is the tenderness of love that Hilda, who formerly shrank at nothing, now shrank away from the gaze of this man. Once, by a great effort, as he entered the dining-room she held out her hand to greet him. Lord Chetwynde, however, did not seem to see it, for he greeted her with his usual distant civility, and treated her as before. Once more she tried this, and yet once again, but with the same result; and it was then that she knew that Lord Chetwynde *refused* to take her hand. It was not oversight—it was a deliberate purpose. At another time it would have seemed an insult which would have filled her with rage; now it seemed a slight which filled her with grief. So humiliated had she become, and so completely subdued by this man, that even this slight was not enough, but she still planned vague ways of winning his attention to her, and of gaining from him something more than a remark about the weather or about the dishes.

At length one day she formed a resolution, which, after much hesitation, she carried out. She was determined to make one bold effort, whatever the result might be. It was at their usual place of meeting—the dinner-table.

"My lord," said she, with a tremulous voice, "I wish to have an interview with you. Can you spare me the time this evening?"

She looked at him earnestly, with mute inquiry. Lord Chetwynde regarded her in some surprise. He saw her eyes fixed upon him with a timid entreaty, while her face grew pale with suspense. Her breathing was rapid from the agitation that overcame her.

"I had some business this evening," said Lord Chetwynde, coldly, "but as you wish an interview, I am at your service."

"At what time, my lord?"

"At nine," said Lord Chetwynde.

Nine o'clock came, and Hilda was in the morning-room, which she had mentioned as the place of meeting, and Lord Chetwynde came there punctually. She was sitting near the window. Her pale face, her rich black locks arranged in voluminous masses about her head, her dark penetrating eyes, her slender and graceful figure, all conspired to make Hilda beautiful

and attractive in a rare degree. Added to this there was a certain entreaty on her face as it was turned toward him, and a soft, timid lustre in her eyes which might have affected any other man. She rose as Lord Chetwynde entered, and bowed her beautiful head, while her graceful arms, and small, delicately shaped hands hung down at her side.

Lord Chetwynde bowed in silence.

"My lord," said Hilda, in a voice which was tremulous from an uncontrollable emotion, "I wished to see you here. We met here once before; you said what you wished; I made no reply; I had nothing to say; I felt your reproaches; they were in some degree just and well-merited; but I might have said something—only I was timid and nervous, and you frightened me."

Here Hilda paused, and drew a long breath. Her emotion nearly choked her, but the sound of her own voice sustained her, and, making an effort, she went on:

"I have nothing to say in defense of my conduct. It has made you hate me. Your hate is too evident. My thoughtless spite has turned back upon myself. I would willingly humiliate myself now if I thought that it would affect you or conciliate you. I would acknowledge any folly of mine if I thought that you could be brought to look upon me with leniency. What I did was the act of a thoughtless girl, angry at finding herself chained up for life, spiteful she knew not why. I had only seen you for a moment, and did not know you. I was mad. I was guilty; but still it is a thing that may be considered as not altogether unnatural under the circumstances. And, after all, it was not sincere—it was pique, it was thoughtlessness—it was not that deep-seated malice which you have laid to my charge. Can you not think of this? Can you not imagine what may have been the feelings of a wild, spoiled, untutored girl, one who was little better than a child, one who found herself shackled she knew not how, and who chafed at all restraint? Can you not understand, or at least imagine, such a case as this, and believe that the one who once sinned has now repented, and asks with tears for your forgiveness?"

Tears? Yes, tears were in the eyes of this singular girl, this girl whose nature was so made up of strength and weakness. Her eyes were suffused with tears as she looked at Lord Chetwynde, and finally, as she ceased, she buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

Now, nothing in nature so moves a man as a woman's tears. If the woman be beautiful, and if she loves the man to whom she speaks, they are irresistible. And here the woman was beautiful, and her love for the man whom she was addressing was evident in her face and in the tones of her voice. Yet Lord Chetwynde sat unmoved. Nothing in his face or in his eyes gave indications of any response on his part. Nothing whatever showed that any thing like soft pity or tender consideration had modified the severity of his purpose or the sternness of his fixed resolve. Yet Lord Chetwynde by nature was not hard-hearted, and Hilda well knew this. In the years which she had spent at the Castle she had heard from every quarter—from the Earl, from Mrs. Hart, and from the servants—tales without number about his generosity, his self-denial, his kindliness, and tender consideration for the feelings of others. Besides this, he had received from his father along with that chivalrous nature the lofty sentiments of a knight-errant, and in his boyish days had always been ready to espouse the cause of any one in distress with the warmest enthusiasm. In Hilda's present attitude, in her appearance, in her words, and above all in her tears, there was every thing that would move such a nature to its inmost depths. Had he ever seen any one at once so beautiful and so despairing; and one, too, whose whole despair arose from her feelings for him? Even his recollections of former disdain might lose their bitterness in the presence of such utter humiliation, such total self-immolation as this. His nature could not have changed, for the Indian paper alluded to his "genial" character, and his "heroic qualities." He must be still the same. What, then, could there be which would be powerful enough to harden his feelings and steel his heart against such a woeful and piteous sight as that which was now exhibited to him? All these things Hilda thought as she made her appeal, and broke down so completely at its close; these things, too, she thought as the tears streamed from her eyes, and as her frame was shaken by emotion.

Lord Chetwynde sat looking at her in silence for a long time. No trace whatever of commiseration appeared upon his face; but he continued as stern, as cold, and as unmoved, as in that first interview when he had told her how he hated her. Bitter indeed must that hate have been which should so crush out all those natural impulses of generosity which belonged to him; bitter must the hate have been; and bitter too must have been the whole of his past experience in connection with this woman, which could end in such pitiless relentlessness.

At length he answered her. His tone was calm, cool, and impassive, like his face; showing not a trace of any change from that tone in which he always addressed her; and making known to her, as she sat with her face buried in her hands, that whatever hopes she had indulged in during his silence, those hopes were altogether vain.

"Lady Chetwynde," he began, "all that you have just said I have thought over long ago, from beginning to end. It has all been in my mind for years. In India there were always hours when the day's duties were over, and the mind would turn to its own private and secret thoughts. From the very first, you, Lady Chetwynde, were naturally the subject of those thoughts to a great degree. That marriage scene was too memorable to be soon forgotten, and the revelation of your character, which I then had, was the first thing which showed me the full weight of the obligation which I had so thoughtlessly accepted. Most bitterly I lamented, on my voyage out, that I had not contrived some plan to evade so hasty a fulfillment of my boyish promise, and that I had not satisfied the General in some way which would not have involved such a scene. But I could not recall the past, and I felt bound by my father's engagement. As to yourself, I assure you that in spite of your malice and your insults I felt most considerately toward you. I pitied you for being, like myself, the unwilling victim of a father's promise and of a sick man's whim, and learned to make allowance for every word

and action of yours at that time. Not one of those words or actions had the smallest effect in imbittering my mind toward you. Not one of those words which you have just uttered has suggested an idea which I have not long ago considered, and pondered over in secret, in silence, and in sorrow. I made a large allowance also for that hate which you must have felt toward one who came to you as I did, in so odious a character, to violate, as I did, the sanctities of death by the mockery of a hideous marriage. All this—all this has been in my mind, and nothing that you can say is able in any way to bring any new idea to me. There are other things far deeper and far more lasting than this, which can not be answered, or excused, or explained away—the long persistent expressions of unchanging hate."

Lord Chetwynde was silent. Hilda had heard all this without moving or raising her head. Every word was ruin to her hopes. But she still hoped against hope, and now, since she had an opportunity to speak, she still tried to move this obdurate heart.

"Hate!" she exclaimed, catching at his last word—"hate! what is that? the fitful, spiteful feeling arising out of the recollection of one miserable scene—or perhaps out of the madness of anger at a forced marriage. What is it? One kind word can dispel it."

As she said this she did not look up. Her face was buried in her hands. Her tone was half despairing, half imploring, and broken by emotion.

"True," said Lord Chetwynde. "All that I have thought of, and I used to console myself with that. I used to say to myself, 'When we meet again it will be different. When she knows me she can not hate me.'"

"You were right," faltered Hilda, with a sob which was almost a groan. "And what then? Say—was it a wonder that I should have felt hate? Was there ever any one so tried as I was? My father was my only friend. He was father and mother and all the world to me. He was brought home one day suddenly, injured by a frightful accident, and dying. At that unparalleled moment I was ordered to prepare for marriage. Half crazed with anxiety and sorrow, and anticipating the very worst—at such a time death itself would have been preferable to that ceremony. But all my feelings were outraged, and I was dragged down to that horrible scene. Can you not see what effect the recollection of this might afterward have? Can you not once again make allowances, and think those thoughts which you used to think? Can you not still see that you were right in supposing that when we might meet all would be different, and that she who might once have known you could not hate you?"

"No," said Lord Chetwynde, coldly and severely.

Hilda raised her head, and looked at him with mute inquiry.

"I will explain," said Lord Chetwynde. "I have already said all that I ought to say; but you force me to say more, though I am unwilling. Your letters, Lady Chetwynde, were the things which quelled and finally killed all kindly feelings."

"Letters!" burst in Hilda, with eager vehemence. "They were the letters of a hot-tempered girl, blinded by pique and self-conceit, and carelessly indulging in a foolish spite which in her heart she did not seriously feel."

"Pardon me," said Lord Chetwynde, with cold politeness, "I think you are forgetting the circumstances under which they were written—for this must be considered as well as the nature of the compositions themselves. They were the letters of one whom my father loved, and of whom he always spoke in the tenderest language, but who yet was so faithless to him that she never ceased to taunt me with what she called our baseness. She never spared the old man who loved her. For months and for years these letters came. It was something more than pique, something more than self-conceit or spite, which lay at the bottom of such long-continued insults. The worst feature about them was their cold-blooded cruelty. Nothing in my circumstances or condition could prevent this—not even that long agony before Delhi"—added Lord Chetwynde, in tones filled with a deeper indignation—"when I, lost behind the smoke and cloud and darkness of the great struggle, was unable to write for a long time; and, finally, was able to give my account of the assault and the triumph. Not even that could change the course of the insults which were so freely heaped upon me. And yet it would have been easy to avoid all this. Why write at all? There was no heavy necessity laid upon you. That was the question which I used to put to myself. But you persisted in writing, and in sending to me over the seas, with diabolical pertinacity, those hideous letters in which every word was a stab."

While Lord Chetwynde had been speaking Hilda sat looking at him, and meeting his stern glance with a look which would have softened any one less bitter. Paler and paler grew her face, and her hands clutched one another in tremulous agitation, which showed her strong emotion.

"Oh, my lord!" she cried, as he ceased, "can you not have mercy? Think of that black cloud that came down over my young life, filling it with gloom and horror. I confess that you and your father appeared the chief agents; but I learned to love *him*, and then all my bitterness turned on *you*—you, who seemed to be so prosperous, so brave, and so honored. It was you who seemed to have blighted my life, and so I was animated by a desire to make you feel something of what I had felt. My disposition is fiery and impetuous; my father's training made it worse. I did not know you; I only felt spite against you, and thus I wrote those fatal letters. I thought that you could have prevented that marriage if you had wished, and therefore could never feel any thing but animosity. But now the sorrows through which I have passed have changed me, and you yourself have made me see how mad was my action. But oh, my lord, believe me, it was not deliberate, it was hasty passion! and now I would be willing to wipe out every word in those hateful letters with my heart's blood!"

Hilda's voice was low but impassioned, with a certain burning fervor of entreaty; her words had become words almost of prayer, so deep was her humiliation. Her face was turned toward him with an imploring expression, and her eyes

were fixed on his in what seemed an agony of suspense. But not even that white face, with its ashen lips and its anguish, nor those eyes with their overflowing tears, nor that voice with its touching pathos of woe, availed in any way to call up any response of pity and sympathy in the breast of Lord Chetwynde.

"You use strong language, Lady Chetwynde," said he, in his usual tone. "You forget that it is you yourself who have transformed all my former kindliness, in spite of myself, into bitterness and gall. You forget, above all, that last letter of yours. You seem to show an emotion which I once would have taken as real. Pardon me if I now say that I consider it nothing more than consummate acting. You speak of consideration. You hint at mercy. Listen, Lady Chetwynde"—and here Lord Chetwynde raised his right hand with solemn emphasis. "You turned away from the death-bed of my father, the man who loved you like a daughter, to write to me that hideous letter which you wrote—that letter, every word of which is still in my memory, and rises up between us to sunder us for evermore. You went beyond yourself. To have spared the living was not needed; but it was the misfortune of your nature that you could not spare the dead. While he was, perhaps, yet lying cold in death near you, you had the heart to write to me bitter sneers against him. Even without that you had done enough to turn me from you always. But when I read that, I then knew most thoroughly that the one who was capable, under such circumstances, of writing thus could only have a mind and heart irretrievably bad—bad and corrupt and base. Never, never, never, while I live, can I forget the utter horror with which that letter filled me!"

"Oh, my God!" said Hilda, with a groan.

Lord Chetwynde sat stern and silent.

"You are inflexible in your cruelty," said Hilda at length, as she made one last and almost hopeless effort. "I have done. But will you not ask me something? Have you nothing to ask about your father? He loved me as a daughter. I was the one who nursed him in his last illness, and heard his last words. His dying eyes were fixed on me!"

As Hilda said this a sharp shudder passed through her.

"No," said Lord Chetwynde, "I have nothing to ask—nothing from *you!* Your last letter has quelled all desire. I would rather remain in ignorance, and know nothing of the last words of him whom I so loved than ask of *you*."

"He called me his daughter. He loved me," said Hilda, in a broken voice.

"And yet you were capable of turning away from his death-bed and writing that letter to his son. You did it coolly and remorselessly."

"It was the anguish of bereavement and despair."

"No; it was the malignancy of the Evil One. Nothing else could have prompted those hideous sneers. In real sorrow sneering is the last thing that one thinks of. But enough. I do not wish to speak in this way to a lady. Yet to you I can speak in no other way. I will therefore retire."

And, with a bow, Lord Chetwynde withdrew.

Hilda looked after him, as he left, with staring eyes, and with a face as pallid as that of a corpse. She rose to her feet. Her hands were clenched tight.

"He loves another," she groaned; "otherwise he never, never, never could have been so pitiless!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SETTING THE DOG ON THE LION'S TRACK.

After this failure in the effort to come to an understanding with Lord Chetwynde, Hilda sank into despondency. She scarcely knew what there was to be done when such an appeal as this had failed. She had humbled herself in the dust before him—she had manifested unmistakably her love, yet he had disregarded all. After this what remained? It was difficult to say. Yet, for herself, she still looked forward to the daily meeting with him: glad of this, since fate would give her nothing better. The change which had come over her was not one which could be noticed by the servants, so that there was no chance of her secret being discovered by them; but there was another at Chetwynde Castle who very quickly discovered all, one who was led to this perhaps by the sympathy of his own feelings. There was that secret within his own heart which made him watchful and attentive and observant. No change in her face and manner, however slight, could fail to be noticed by this man, who treasured up every varying expression of hers within his heart. And this change which had come over her was one which affected him by much more than the mere variation of features. It entered into his daily life and disarranged all his plans.

Before the arrival of Lord Chetwynde, Gualtier, in his capacity of steward, had been accustomed to have frequent interviews with Hilda. Now they were all over. Since that arrival he had not spoken to her once, nor had he once got so much as a glance of her eye. At first he accounted for it from very natural causes. He attributed it to the anxiety which she felt at the presence of Lord Chetwynde, and at the desperate part which she had to play. For some time this seemed sufficient to account for every thing. But afterward he learned enough to make him think it possible that there were other causes. He heard the gossip of the servants' hall, and from that he learned that it was the common opinion of the servants that Lady Chetwynde was very fond of Lord Chetwynde, but that the latter was very distant and reserved in his manner toward her. This started him on a new track for conjecture, and he soon learned and saw enough to get some general idea of the truth. Yet, after all, it was not the actual truth which he conjectured. His conclusion was that Hilda was playing a deep game in order to win Lord Chetwynde's affection to herself. The possibility of her actually loving him did not then suggest itself. He looked upon it as one of those profound pieces of policy for which he was always on the look-out from her. The discovery of this disturbed him. The arrival of Lord Chetwynde had troubled him; but this new plan of Hilda's troubled him still more, and all the more because he was now shut out from her confidence.

"The little thing is up to a new game; and she'll beat," he said to himself; "she'll beat, for she always beats. She's got a long head, and I

can only guess what it is that she is up to. She'll never tell me." And he thought, with some pensiveness, upon the sadness of that one fact, that she would never tell him. Meanwhile he contented himself with watching until something more definite could be known.

Lord Chetwynde had much to occupy him in his father's papers. He spent the greater part of his time in the library, and though weeks passed he did not seem to be near the end of them. At other times he rode about the grounds or sauntered through the groves. The seclusion in which the Castle had always been kept was not disturbed. The county families were too remote for ordinary calling, or else they did not know of his arrival. Certain it is that no one entered these solitary precincts except the doctor. The state of things here was puzzling to him. He saw Lord Chetwynde whenever he came, but he never saw Lady Chetwynde. On his asking anxiously about her he was told that she was well. It was surprising to him that she never showed herself, but he attributed it to her grief for the dead. He did not know what had become of Miss Krieff, whose zeal in the sick-room had won his admiration. Lord Chetwynde was too haughty for him to question, and the servants were all new faces. It was therefore with much pleasure that he one day saw Gualtier. Him he accosted, shaking hands with him earnestly, and with a familiarity which he had never cared to bestow in former days. But curiosity was stronger than his sense of personal dignity. Gualtier allowed himself to be questioned, and gave the doctor that information which he judged best for the benefit of the world without. Lady Chetwynde, he told him, was still mourning over the loss of her best friend, and even the return of her husband had not been sufficient to fill the vacant place. Miss Krieff, he said, had gone to join her friends in North Britain, and he, Gualtier, had been appointed steward in place of the former one, who had gone away to London. This information was received by the doctor with great satisfaction, since it set his mind at rest completely about certain things which had puzzled him.

That evening one of the servants informed Gualtier that Lady Chetwynde wished to see him in the library. His pale face flushed up, and his eyes lightened as he walked there. She was alone. He bowed reverentially, yet not before he had cast toward her a look full of unutterable devotion. She was paler than before. There was sadness on her face. She had thrown herself carelessly in an arm-chair, and her hands were nervously clutching one another. Never before had he seen any thing approaching to emotion in this singular being. Her present agitation surprised him, for he had not suspected the possibility of any thing like this.

She returned his greeting with a slight bow, and then fell for a time into a fit of abstraction, during which she did not take any further notice of him. Gualtier was more impressed by this than by any other thing. Always before she had been self-possessed, with all her faculties alive and in full activity. Now she seemed so dull and so changed that he did not know what to think. He began to fear the approach of some calamity by which all his plans would be ruined.

"Mr. M'Kenzie," said Hilda, rousing herself at length, and speaking in a harsh, constrained voice, which yet was low and not audible except to one who was near her, "have you seen Lord Chetwynde since his arrival?"

"No, my lady," said Gualtier, respectfully, yet wondering at the abruptness with which she introduced the subject. For it had always hitherto been her fashion to lead the conversation on by gradual approaches toward the particular thing about which she might wish to make inquiries.

"I thought," she continued, in the same tone, "that he might have called you up to gain information about the condition of the estate."

"No, my lady, he has never shown any such desire. In fact, he does not seem to be conscious that there is such a person as myself in existence."

"Since he came," said Hilda, dreamily, "he has been altogether absorbed in the investigation of papers relating to his father's business affairs; and as he has not been here for many years, during which great changes must have taken place in the condition of things, I did not know but that he might have sought to gain information from you."

"No, my lady," said Gualtier once more, still preserving that unfaltering respect with which he always addressed her, and wondering whither these inquiries might be tending, or what they might mean. That she should ask him any thing about Lord Chetwynde filled him with a vague alarm, and seemed to show that the state of things was unsatisfactory, if not critical. He was longing to ask about that first meeting of hers with Lord Chetwynde, and also about the position which they at present occupied toward one another—a position most perplexing to him, and utterly inexplicable. Yet on such subjects as these he did not dare to speak. He could only hope that she herself would speak of them to him, and that she had chosen this occasion to make a fresh confidence to him.

After his last answer Hilda did not say any thing for some time. Her nervousness seemed to increase. Her hands still clutched one another; and her bosom heaved and fell in quick, rapid breathings which showed the agitation that existed within her.

"Lord Chetwynde," said Hilda at last, rousing herself with a visible effort, and looking round with something of her old stealthy watchfulness —"Lord Chetwynde is a man who keeps his own counsel, and does not choose to give even so much as a hint about the nature of his occupations. He has now some purpose on his mind which he does not choose to confide to me, and I do not know how it is possible for me to find it out. Yet it is a thing which must be of importance, for he is not a man who would stay here so long and labor so hard on a mere trifle. His ostensible occupation is the business of the estate, and certain plans arising in connection with this; but beneath this ostensible occupation there is some purpose which it is impossible for me to fathom. Yet I must find it out, whatever it is, and I have invited you here to see if I could not get your assistance. You once went to work keenly and indefatigably to investigate something for me; and here is an occasion on which, if you feel inclined, you can

again exercise your talents. It may result in something of the greatest importance."

Hilda had spoken in low tones, and as she concluded she looked at Gualtier with a penetrating glance. Such a request showed him that he was once more indispensable. His heart beat fast, and his face lighted up with joy.

"My lady," said he, in a low, earnest voice, "it surely can not be necessary for me to tell you that I am always ready to do your bidding, whatever it may be. There is no necessity to remind me of the past. When shall I begin this? At once? Have you formed any plan of action which you would like me to follow?"

"Only in a general way," said Hilda. "It is not at Chetwynde that I want you to work, but elsewhere. You can do nothing here. I myself have already done all that you could possibly do, and more too, in the way of investigation in this house. But in spite of all my efforts I have found nothing, and so I see plainly that the search must be carried on in another place."

"And where may that be?" asked Gualtier.

"He has some purpose in his mind," Hilda went on to say—"some one engrossing object, I know not what, which is far more important than any thing relating to business, and which is his one great aim in life at present. This is what I wish to find out. It may threaten danger, and if so I wish to guard against it."

"Is there any danger?" asked Gualtier, cautiously.

"Not as yet—that is, so far as I can see."

"Does he suspect any thing?" said Gualtier, in a whisper.

"Nothing."

"You seem agitated."

"Never mind what I seem," said Hilda, coldly; "my health is not good. As to Lord Chetwynde, he is going away in a short time, and the place to which he goes will afford the best opportunity for finding out what his purpose is. I wish to know if it is possible for you in any way to follow him so as to watch him. You did something once before that was not more difficult."

Gualtier smiled.

"I think I can promise, my lady," said he, "that I will do all that you desire. I only wish that it was something more difficult, so that I could do the more for you."

"You may get your wish," said Hilda, gloomily, and in a tone that penetrated to the inmost soul of Gualtier. "You may get your wish, and that, too, before long. But at present I only wish you to do this. It is a simple task of watchfulness and patient observation."

"I will do it as no man ever did it before," said Gualtier. "You shall know the events of every hour of his life till he comes back again."

"That will do, then. Be ready to leave whenever he does. Choose your own way of observing him, either openly or secretly; you yourself know best."

Hilda spoke very wearily, and rose to withdraw. As she passed, Gualtier stood looking at her with an imploring face. She carelessly held out her hand. He snatched it in both of his and pressed it to his lips.

"My God!" he cried, "it's like ice! What is the matter?"

Hilda did not seem to hear him, but walked slowly out of the room.

About a week after this Lord Chetwynde took his departure.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ODED STANDS AT BAY.

On leaving Marseilles all Zillah's troubles seemed to return to her once more. The presence of Windham had dispelled them for a time; now that he was present no longer there was nothing to save her from sorrow. She had certainly enough to weigh down any one, and among all her sorrows her latest grief stood pre-eminent. The death of the Earl, the cruel discovery of those papers in her father's drawer by which there seemed to be a stain on her father's memory, the intolerable insult which she had endured in that letter from Guy to his father, the desperate resolution to fly, the anguish which she had endured on Hilda's account, and, finally, the agony of that lone voyage in the drifting schooner—all these now came back to her with fresher violence, recurring again with overpowering force from the fact that they had been kept off so long. Yet there was not one memory among all these which so subdued her as the memory of the parting scene with Windham. This was the great sorrow of her life. Would she ever meet him again? Perhaps not. Or why should she? Of what avail would it be?

Passing over the seas she gave herself up to her recollections, and to the mournful thoughts that crowded in upon her. Among other things, she could not help thinking and wondering about Windham's despair. What was the reason that he had always kept such a close watch over himself? What was the reason why he never ventured to utter in words that which had so often been expressed in his eloquent face? Above all, what was the cause of that despairing cry which had escaped him when they exchanged their last farewell? It was the recognition on his part of some insuperable obstacle that lay between them. That was certain. Yet what could the obstacle be? Clearly, it could not have been the knowledge of her own position. It was perfectly evident that Windham knew nothing whatever about her, and could have not even the faintest idea of the truth. It must therefore be, as she saw it, that this obstacle could only be one which was in connection with himself. And what could that be? Was he a priest under vows of celibacy? She smiled at the preposterous idea. Was he engaged to be married in England, and was he now on the way to his bride? Could this be it? and was his anguish the result of the conflict between love and honor in his breast? This may have been the case. Finally, was he married already? She could not tell. She rather fancied that it was an engagement, not a marriage; and it was in this that she thought she could find the meaning of his passionate and despairing words.

Passing over those waters where once she had known what it was to be betrayed, and had tasted of the bitterness of death, she did not find that they had power to renew the despair which they once had caused. Behind the black memory of that hour of anguish rose up an-

other memory which engrossed all her thoughts. If she had tears, it was for this. It was Windham, whose image filled all her soul, and whose last words echoed through her heart. For as she gazed on these waters it was not of the drifting schooner that she thought, not of the hours of intense watchfulness, not of the hope deferred that gradually turned into despair; it was rather of the man who, as she had often heard since, was the one who first recognized her, and came to her in her senselessness, and bore her in his arms back to life. Had he done well in rescuing her? Had he not saved her for a greater sorrow? Whether he had or not mattered not. He had saved her, and her life was his. That strange rescue constituted a bond between them which could not be dissolved. Their lives might run henceforth in lines which should never meet, but still they belonged henceforth to one another, though they might never possess one another. Out from among these waters there came also sweeter memories—the memories of voyages over calm seas, under the shadow of the hoary Alps, where they passed away those golden hours, knowing that the end must come, yet resolved to enjoy to the full the rapture of the present. These were the thoughts that sustained her. No grief could rob her of these; but in cherishing them her soul found peace.

Those into whose society she had been thrown respected her grief and her reticence. For the first day she had shut herself up in her room; but the confinement became intolerable, and she was forced to go out on deck. She somewhat dreaded lest Obed Chute, out of the very kindness of his heart, would come and try to entertain her. She did not feel in the mood for talking. Any attempt at entertaining her she felt would be unendurable. But she did not know the perfect refinement of sentiment that dwelt beneath the rough exterior of Obed. He seemed at once to divine her state of mind. With the utmost delicacy he found a place for her to sit, but said little or nothing to her, and for all the remainder of the voyage treated her with a silent deference of attention which was most grateful. She knew that he was not neglectful. She saw a hundred times a day that Obed's mind was filled with anxiety about her, and that to minister to her comfort was his one idea. But it was not in words that this was expressed. It was in helping her up and down from the cabin to the deck, in fetching wraps, in speaking a cheerful word from time to time, and, above all, in keeping his family away from her, that he showed his watchful attention. Thus the time passed, and Zillah was left to brood over her griefs, and to conjecture hopelessly and at random about the future. What would that future bring forth? Would the presence of Hilda console her in any way? She did not see how it could. After the first joy of meeting, she felt that she would relapse into her usual sadness. Time only could relieve her, and her only hope was patience.

At last they landed at Naples. Obed took the party to a handsome house on the Strada Nuova, where he had lodged when he was in Naples before, and where he obtained a suite of apartments in front, which commanded a magnificent view of the bay, with all its unrivaled scenery, together with the tumultuous life of the street below. Here he left them, and departed himself almost immediately to begin his search after Hilda. Her letter mentioned that she was stopping at the "Hôtel de l'Europe," in the Strada Toledo; and to this place he first directed his way.

On arriving here he found a waiter who could speak English, which was a fortunate thing, in his opinion, as he could not speak a word of any other language. He at once asked if a lady by the name of Miss Lorton was stopping here.

The waiter looked at him with a peculiar glance, and surveyed him from head to foot. There was something in the expression of his face which appeared very singular to Obed—a mixture of eager curiosity and surprise, which to him, to say the least, seemed uncalled for under the circumstances. He felt indignant at such treatment from a waiter.

"If you will be kind enough to stare less and answer my question," said he, "I will feel obliged; but perhaps you don't understand English."

"I beg pardon," said the other, in very good English; "but what was the name of the lady?"

"Miss Lorton," said Obed.

The waiter looked at him again with the same peculiar glance, and then replied:

"I don't know, but I will ask. Wait here a moment."

Saying this, he departed, and Obed saw him speaking to some half a dozen persons in the hall very earnestly and hurriedly; then he went off, and in about five minutes returned in company with the master of the hotel.

"Were you asking after a lady?" said he, in very fair English, and bowing courteously to Obed.

"I was," said Obed, who noticed at the same time that this man was regarding him with the same expression of eager and scrutinizing curiosity which he had seen on the face of the other.

"And what was the name?"

"Miss Lorton."

"Miss Lorton?" repeated the other; "yes, she is here. Will you be kind enough to follow me to the parlor until I see whether she is at home or not, and make her acquainted with your arrival?"

At this information, which was communicated with extreme politeness, Obed felt such immense relief that he forgot altogether about the very peculiar manner in which he had been scrutinized. A great weight seemed suddenly to have been lifted off his soul. For the first time in many weeks he began to breathe freely. He thought of the joy which he would bring to that poor young girl who had been thrown so strangely under his protection, and who was so sad. For a moment he hesitated whether to wait any longer or not. His first impulse was to hurry away and bring her here; but then in a moment he thought it would be far better to wait, and to take back Miss Lorton with him in triumph to her sister.

The others watched his momentary hesitation with some apparent anxiety; but at length it was dispelled by Obed's reply:

"Thank you. I think I had better wait and see her. I hope I won't be detained long."

"Oh no. She is doubtless in her room. You will only have to wait a few minutes."

Saying this, they led the way to a pleasant

apartment looking out on the Strada Toledo, and here Obed took a seat, and lost himself in speculations as to the appearance of the elder Miss Lorton. In about five minutes the door was opened, and the master of the hotel made his appearance again.

"I find," said he, politely, "that Miss Lorton is not in. She went out only a few minutes before you came. She left word with her maid, however, that she was going to a shop up the Strada Toledo to buy some jewelry. I am going to send a messenger to hasten her return. Shall I send your name by him?"

"Well," said Obed, "I don't know as it's necessary. Better wait till I see her myself."

The landlord said nothing, but looked at him with strange earnestness.

"By-the-way," said Obed, "how is she?"

"She?"

"Yes; Miss Lorton."

"Oh," said the landlord, "very well."

"She recovered from her illness then?"

"Oh yes."

"Is she in good spirits?"

"Good spirits?"

"Yes; is she happy?"

"Oh yes."

"I am glad to hear it. I was afraid she might be melancholy."

"Oh no," said the landlord, with some appearance of confusion; "oh no. She's very well. Oh yes."

His singular behavior again struck Obed rather oddly, and he stared at him for a moment. But he at last thought that the landlord might not know much about the health or the happiness of his guest, and was answering from general impressions.

"I will hasten then, Sir," said the landlord, advancing to the door, "to send the messenger; and if you will be kind enough to wait, she will be here soon."

He bowed, and going out, he shut the door behind him. Obed, who had watched his embarrassment, thought that he heard the key turn. The thing seemed very odd, and he stepped up to the door to try it. It was locked!

"Well, I'll be darned!" cried Obed, standing before the door and regarding it with astonishment. "I've seen some curious foreign fashions, but this here *Italian* fashion of locking a man in is a little the curiousest. And what in thunder is the meaning of it?"

He looked at the door with a frown, while there was that on his face which showed that he might be deliberating whether to kick through the panels or not. But his momentary indignation soon subsided, and, with a short laugh, he turned away and strolled up to the window with an indifferent expression. There he drew up an arm-chair, and seating himself in this, he looked out into the street. For some time his attention and his thoughts were all engaged by the busy scene; but at length he came to himself, and began to think that it was about time for the return of Miss Lorton. He paced up and down the room impatiently, till growing tired of this rather monotonous employment, he sought the window again. Half an hour had now passed, and Obed's patience was fast failing. Still he waited on, and another half hour passed. Then he deliberated whether it would not be better to go back to his rooms, and bring the younger Miss Lorton here to see her sister. But this thought he soon dismissed. Having waited so long for the sake of carrying out his first plan, it seemed weak to give it up on account of a little impatience. He determined, however, to question the landlord again; so he pulled at the bell.

No answer came.

He pulled again and again for some minutes.

Still there was no answer.

He now began to feel indignant, and determined to resort to extreme measures. So going to the door, he rapped upon it with his stick several times, each time waiting for an answer. But no answer came. Then he beat incessantly against the door, keeping up a long, rolling, ratlling volley of knocks without stopping, and making noise enough to rouse the whole house, even if every body in the house should happen to be in the deepest of slumbers. Yet even now for some time there was no response; and Obed at length was beginning to think of his first purpose, and preparing to kick through the panels, when his attention was aroused by the sound of heavy footsteps in the hall. They came nearer and nearer as he stood waiting, and at length stopped in front of the door. His only thought was that this was the lady whom he sought; so he stepped back, and hastily composed his face to a pleasant smile of welcome. With this pleasant smile he awaited the opening of the door.

But as the door opened his eyes were greeted by a sight very different from what he anticipated. No graceful lady-like form was there—no elder and maturer likeness of that Miss Lorton whose face was now so familiar to him, and so dear—but a dozen or so gens d'armes, headed by the landlord. The latter entered the room, while the others stood outside in the hall.

"Well," said Obed, angrily. "What is the meaning of this parade? Where is Miss Lorton?"

"These gentlemen," said the landlord, with much politeness, "will convey you to the residence of that charming lady."

"It seems to me," said Obed, sternly, "that you have been humbugging me. Give me a civil answer, or I swear I'll wring your neck. Is Miss Lorton here or not?"

The landlord stepped back hastily a pace or two, and made a motion to the gens d'armes. A half dozen of these filed into the room, and arranged themselves by the windows. The rest remained in the hall.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Obed. "Are you crazy?"

"The meaning is this," said the other, sharply and fiercely. "I am not the landlord of the Hôtel de l'Europe, but sub-agent of the Neapolitan police. And I arrest you in the name of the king."

"Arrest *me*!" cried Obed. "What the deuce do you mean?"

"It means, Monsieur, that you are trapped at last. I have watched for you for seven weeks, and have got you now. You need not try to resist. That is impossible."

Obed looked round in amazement. What was the meaning of it all? There were the gens d'armes—six in the hall, and six in the room. All were armed. All looked prepared to fall on him at the slightest signal.

"Are you a born fool?" he cried at last, turn-

"DON'T MOVE, OR I'LL BLOW YOUR BRAINS OUT!"

ing to the "agent." "Do you know what you are doing? I am an American, a native of the great republic, a free man, and a gentleman. What do you mean by this insult, and these beggarly policemen?"

"I mean this," said the other, "that you are my prisoner."

"I am, am I?" said Obed, with a grim smile. "A prisoner! My friend, that is a difficult thing to come to pass without my consent."

And saying this, he quietly drew a revolver from his breast pocket.

"Now," said he, "my good friend, look here. I have this little instrument, and I'm a dead

shot. I don't intend to be humbugged. If any one of you dare to make a movement I'll put a bullet through you. And you, you scoundrel, stand where you are, or you'll get the first bullet. You've got hold of the wrong man this time, but I'm going to get satisfaction for this out of your infernal beggarly government. As to you, answer my questions. First, who the deuce do you take me to be? You've made some infernal mistake or other."

The agent cowered beneath the stern eye of Obed. He felt himself covered by his pistol, and did not dare to move. The gens d'armes looked disturbed, but made no effort to interfere. They felt that they had to do with a desperate man, and waited for orders.

"Don't you hear my question?" thundered Obed. "What the deuce is the meaning of this, and who the deuce do you take me for? Don't move," he cried, seeing a faint movement of the agent's hand; "or I'll blow your brains out; I will, by the Eternal!"

"Beware," faltered the agent; "I belong to the police. I am doing my duty."

"Pooh! What is your beggarly police to me, or your beggarly king either, and all his court? There are a couple of Yankee frigates out there that could bring down the whole concern in a half hour's bombardment. You've made a mistake, you poor, pitiful concern; but I'm in search of information, and I'm bound to get it. Answer me now without any more humbugging. What's the meaning of this?"

"I was ordered to watch for any one who might come here and ask for '*Miss Lorton,*'" said the agent, who spoke like a criminal to a judge. "I have watched here for seven weeks. You came to-day, and you are under arrest."

"Ah?" said Obed, as a light began to flash upon him. "Who ordered you to watch?"

"The prefect."

"Do you know any thing about the person whom you were to arrest?"

"No."

"Don't you know his crime?"

"No. It had something to do with the French police."

"Do you know his name?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"*Gualtier,*" said the agent.

"And you think I am Gualtier?"

"Yes."

"And so there is no such person as Miss Lorton here?"

"No."

"Hasn't she been here at all?"

"No; no such person has ever been here."

"That 'll do," said Obed, gravely, and with some sadness in his face. As he spoke, he put back his revolver into his pocket. "My good friend," said he, "you've made a mistake, and put me to some annoyance, but you've only done your duty. I forgive you. I am not this man Gualtier whom you are after, but I am the man that is after him. Perhaps it would have been better for me to have gone straight to the police when I first came, but I thought I'd find her here. However, I can go there now. I have a message and a letter of introduction to the prefect of police here from the prefect at Marseilles, which I am anxious now to deliver as soon as possible. So, my young friend, I'll go with you after all, and you needn't be in the least afraid of me."

The agent still looked dubious; but Obed, who was in a hurry now, and had got over his indignation, took from his pocket-book some official documents bearing the marks of the French prefecture, and addressed to that of Naples. This satisfied the agent, and, with many apologies, he walked off with Obed down to the door, and there entering a cab, they drove to the prefecture.

CHAPTER XL.

GLIMPSES OF THE TRUTH.

MEANWHILE, during Obed's absence, Zillah remained in the Strada Nuova. The windows looked out upon the street and upon the bay, commanding a view of the most glorious scenery on earth, and also of the most exciting street spectacles which any city can offer. Full of impatience though she was, she could not remain unaffected by that first glimpse of Naples, which she then obtained from those windows by which she was sitting. For what city is like Naples? Beauty, life, laughter, gayety, all have their home here. The air itself is intoxication. The giddy crowds that whirl along in every direction seem to belong to a different and a more joyous race than sorrowing humanity. For ages Naples has been "the captivating," and still she possesses the same charm, and she will possess it for ages yet to come.

The scene upon which Zillah gazed was one which might have brought distraction and alleviation to cares and griefs even heavier than hers. Never had she seen such a sight as this which she now beheld. There before her spread away the deep blue waters of Naples Bay, dotted by the snow-white sails of countless vessels, from the small fishing-boat up to the giant ship of war. On that sparkling bosom of the deep was represented almost every thing that floats, from the light, swift, and curiously rigged lateen sloop, to the modern mail-packet. Turning from the sea the eye might rest upon the surrounding shores, and find there material of even deeper interest. On the right, close by, was the projecting castle, and sweeping beyond this the long curving beach, above which, far away, rose the green trees of the gardens of the Villa Reale. Farther away rose the hills on whose slope stands what is claimed to be the grave of Virgil, whose picturesque monument, whether it be really his or not, suggests his well-known epitaph:

"I sing flocks, tillage, heroes. Mantua gave
Me life; Brundusium death; Naples a grave."

Through those hills runs the Titanic grotto of Posilippo, which leads to that historic land beyond—the land of the Cumæans and Oscans; or, still more, the land of the luxurious Romans of the empire; where Sylla lived, and Cicero loved to retire; which Julius loved, and Horace, and every Roman of taste or refinement. There spread away the lake Lucrine, bordered by the Elysian Fields; there was the long grotto through which Æneas passed; where once the Cumæan Sibyl dwelt and delivered her oracles. There was Misenum, where once the Roman navy rode

at anchor; Baiæ, where once all Roman luxury loved to pass the summer season; Puteoli, where St. Paul landed when on his way to Cæsar's throne. There were the waters in which Nero thought to drown Agrippina, and over which another Roman emperor built that colossal bridge which set at defiance the prohibition of nature. There was the rock of Ischia, terminating the line of coast; and out at sea, immediately in front, the isle of Capri, forever associated with the memory of Tiberius, with his deep wiles, his treachery, and his remorseless cruelty. There, too, on the left and nearest Capri, were the shores of Sorrento, that earthly paradise whose trees are always green, whose fruits always ripe; there the cave of Polyphemus penetrates the lofty mountains, and brings back that song of Homer by which it is immortalized. Coming nearer, the eye rested on the winding shores of Castellamare, on vineyards and meadows and orchards, which fill all this glorious land. Nearer yet the scene was dominated by the stupendous form of Vesuvius, at once the glory and the terror of all this scene, from whose summit there never ceases to come that thin line of smoke, the symbol of possible ruin to all who dwell within sight of it. Round it lie the buried cities, whose charred remains have been exhumed to tell what may yet be the fate of those other younger cities which have arisen on their ashes.

While the scene beyond was so enthralling, there was one nearer by which was no less so. This was the street itself, with that wild, never-ending rush of riotous, volatile, multitudinous life, which can be equaled by no other city. There the crowd swept along on horseback, on wheels, on foot; gentlemen riding for pleasure, or dragoons on duty; parties driving into the country; tourists on their way to the environs; market farmers with their rude carts; wine-sellers; fig-dealers; peddlers of oranges, of dates, of anisette, of water, of macaroni. Through the throng innumerable calashes dashed to and fro, crowded down, in true Neapolitan fashion, with inconceivable numbers; for in Naples the calash is not full unless a score or so are in some way clinging to it—above, below, before, behind. There, too, most marked of all, were the lazaroni, whose very existence in Naples is a sign of the ease with which life is sustained in so fair a spot, who are born no one knows where, who live no one knows how, but who secure as much of the joy of life as any other human beings; the strange result of that endless combination of races which have come together in Naples—the Greek, the Italian, the Norman, the Saracen, and Heaven only knows what else.

Such scenes as these, such crowds, such life, such universal movement, for a long time attracted Zillah's attention; and she watched them with childish eagerness. At last, however, the novelty was over, and she began to wonder why Obed Chute had not returned. Looking at her watch, she found, to her amazement, that two hours had passed since his departure. He had left at ten; it was then mid-day. What was keeping him? She had expected him back before half an hour, but he had not yet returned. She had thought that it needed but a journey to the Hôtel de l'Europe to find Hilda, and bring her here. Anxiety now began to arise in her mind, and the scenes outside lost all charm for her. Her impatience increased till it became intolerable. Miss Chute saw her agitation, and made some attempt to soothe her, but in vain. In fact, by one o'clock, Zillah had given herself up to all sorts of fears. Sometimes she thought that Hilda had grown tired of waiting, and had gone back to England, and was now searching through France and Italy for her; again she thought that perhaps she had experienced a relapse and had died here in Naples, far away from all friends, while she herself was loitering in Marseilles; at another time her fears took a more awful turn—her thoughts turned on Gualtier—and she imagined that he had, perhaps, come on to Naples to deal to Hilda that fate which he had tried to deal to her. These thoughts were all maddening, and filled her with uncontrollable agitation. She felt sure at last that some dread thing had happened, which Obed Chute had discovered, and which he feared to reveal to her. Therefore he kept away; and on no other grounds could she account for his long-continued absence.

Two o'clock passed—and three, and four, and five. The suspense was fearful to Zillah, so fearful, indeed, that at last she felt that it would be a relief to hear any news—even the worst.

At length her suspense was ended. About half past five Obed returned. Anxiety was on his face, and he looked at Zillah with an expression of the deepest pity and commiseration. She on her part advanced to meet him with white lips and trembling frame, and laid on his hand her own, which was like ice.

"You have not found her?" she faltered, in a scarce audible voice.

Obed shook his head.

"She is dead, then!" cried Zillah; "she is dead! She died here—among strangers—in Naples, and I—I delayed in Marseilles!"

A deep groan burst from her, and all the anguish of self-reproach and keen remorse swept over her soul.

Obed Chute looked at her earnestly and mournfully.

"My child," said he, taking her little hand tenderly in both of his—"my poor child—you need not be afraid that your sister is dead. She is alive—as much as you are."

"Alive!" cried Zillah, rousing herself from her despair. "Alive! God be thanked! Have you found out that? But where is she?"

"Whether God is to be thanked or not I do not know," said Obed; "but it's my solemn belief that she is as much alive as she ever was."

"But where is she?" cried Zillah, eagerly. "Have you found out that?"

"It would take a man with a head as long as a horse to tell that," said Obed, sententiously.

"What do you mean? Have you not found out that? How do you know that she is alive? You only hope so—as I do. You do not know so. Oh, do not, do not keep me in suspense."

"I mean," said Obed, slowly and solemnly, "that this sister of yours has never been in Naples; that there is no such steamer in existence as that which she mentions in her letter which you showed me; that there is no such ship, and no such captain, and no such captain's wife, as those which she writes about; that no

such person was ever picked up adrift in that way, and brought here, except your own poor innocent, trustful, loving self—you, my poor dear child, who have been betrayed by miserable assassins. And by the Eternal!" cried Obed, with a deeper solemnity in his voice, raising up at the same time his colossal arm and his clenched fist to heaven—"by the Eternal! I swear I'll trace all this out yet, and pay it out in full to these infernal devils!"

"Oh, my God!" cried Zillah. "What do you mean? Do you mean that Hilda has not been here at all?"

"No such person has ever been in Naples."

"Why, was she not picked up adrift? and where could they have taken her?"

"She never was picked up. Rely upon that. No such ship as the one she mentions has ever been here."

"Then she has written down 'Naples' in mistake," cried Zillah, while a shudder passed through her at Obed's frightful insinuation.

"No," said Obed. "She wrote it down deliberately, and wrote it several times. Her repetition of that name, her description of the charms of Naples, show that she did this intentionally. Besides, your envelope has the Naples postage stamps and the Naples post-marks. It was mailed here, whether it was written here or not. It was sent from here to fetch you to this place, on this journey, which resulted as you remember."

"Oh, my God!" cried Zillah, as the full horror of Obed's meaning began to dawn upon her. "What do you mean? What do you mean? Do you wish to drive me to utter despair? Tell me where you have been and what you have done. Oh, my God! Is any new grief coming?"

"My child, the Lord on high knows," said Obed Chute, with solemn emphasis, "that I would cut off my right hand with my own bowie-knife, rather than bring back to you the news I do. But what can be done? It is best for you to know the whole truth, bitter as it is."

"Go on," said Zillah, with an effort to be calm.

"Come," said Obed, and he led her to a seat. "Calm yourself, and prepare for the worst. For at the outset, and by way of preparation and warning, I will say that yours is a little the darkest case that I ever got acquainted with. The worst of it is that there is ever so much behind it all which I don't know any thing about."

Zillah leaned her head upon her hand and looked at him with awful forebodings.

"When I left you," said Obed Chute, "I went at once to the Hôtel de l'Europe, expecting to find her there, or at least to hear of her. I will not relate the particulars of my inquiry there. I will only say that no such person as Miss Lorton had been there. I found, however, that the police had been watching there for seven weeks for Gualtier. I went with them to the Prefecture of Police. I gave my letter of introduction from the prefect of Marseilles, and was treated with the utmost attention. The prefect himself informed me that they had been searching into the whole case for weeks. They had examined all the vessels that had arrived, and had inspected all their logs. They had searched through foreign papers. They had visited every house in the city to which a stranger might go. The prefect showed me his voluminous reports, and went with me to the Harbor Bureau to show me the names of ships which arrived here and were owned here. Never could there be a more searching investigation than this had been. What was the result?

"Listen," said Obed, with impressive emphasis, yet compassionately, as Zillah hung upon his words. "I will tell you all in brief. First, no such person as Miss Lorton ever came to the Hôtel de l'Europe. Secondly, no such person ever came to Naples at all. Thirdly, no ship arrived here at the date mentioned by your sister. Fourthly, no ship of that name ever came here at all. Fifthly, no ship arrived here at any time this year that had picked up any one at sea. The whole thing is untrue. It is a base fiction made up for some purpose."

"A fiction!" cried Zillah. "Never—never—she could not so deceive me."

"Can the writing be forged?"

"I don't see how it can," said Zillah, piteously. "I know her writing so well," and she drew the letter from her pocket. "See—it is a very peculiar hand—and then, how could any one speak as she does about those things of hers which she wished me to bring? No—it can not be a forgery."

"It is not," said Obed Chute. "It is worse."

"Worse?"

"Yes, worse. If it had been a forgery she would not have been implicated in this. But now she does stand implicated in this horrible betrayal of you."

"Heavens! how terrible! It must be impossible. Oh, Sir! we have lived together and loved one another from childhood. She knows all my heart, as I know hers. How can it be? Perhaps in her confusion she has imagined herself in Naples."

"No," said Obed, sternly. "I have told you about the post-marks."

"Oh, Sir! perhaps her mind was wandering after the suffering of that sea voyage."

"But she never had any voyage," said Obed Chute, grimly. "This letter was written by her somewhere with the intention of making you believe that she was in Naples. It was *mailed here*. If she had landed in Palermo or any other place you would have had some sign of it. But see—there is not a sign. Nothing but 'Naples' is here, inside and out—nothing but 'Naples;' and she never came to Naples! She wrote this to bring you here."

"Oh, my God! how severely you judge her! You will drive me mad by insinuating such frightful suspicions. How is it possible that one whom I know so well and love so dearly could be such a demon as this? It can not be."

"Listen, my child," said Obed Chute, tenderly. "Strengthen yourself. You have had much to bear in your young life, but this is easier to bear than that was which you must have suffered that morning when you first woke and found the water in your cabin. Tell me—in that hour when you rushed up on deck and saw that you were betrayed—in that hour—did no thought come to your mind that there was some other than Gualtier who brought this upon you?"

Zillah looked at him with a frightened face, and said not a word.

"Better to face the worst. Let the truth be known, and face it, whatever it is. Look, now. She wrote this letter which brought you here—this letter—every word of which is a lie; she it was who sent Gualtier to you to bring you here; she it was who recommended to you that miscreant who betrayed you, on whose tracks the police of France and Italy are already set. How do you suppose she will appear in the eyes of the French police? Guilty, or not guilty?"

Zillah muttered some inarticulate words, and then suddenly gasped out, "But the hat and the basket found by the fishermen?"

"Decoys—common tricks," said Obed Chute, scornfully. "Clumsy enough, but in this case successful."

Zillah groaned, and buried her face in her hands.

A long silence followed.

"My poor child," said Obed Chute at last, "I have been all the day making inquiries every where, and have already engaged the police to search out this mystery. There is one thing yet, however, which I wish to know, and you only can tell it. I am sorry to have to talk in this way, and give you any new troubles, but it is for your sake only, and for your sake there is nothing which I would not do. Will you answer me one question?"

Zillah looked up. Her face had now grown calm. The agitation had passed. The first shock was over, but this calm which followed was the calm of fixed grief—a grief too deep for tears.

"My question is this, and it is a very important one: Do you know, or can you conceive of any motive which could have actuated this person to plot against you in this way?"

"I do not."

"Think."

Zillah thought earnestly. She recalled the past, in which Hilda had always been so devoted; she thought of the dying Earl by whose bedside she had stood so faithfully; she thought of her deep sympathy with her when the writings were found in her father's desk; she thought of that deeper sympathy which she had manifested when Guy's letter was opened; she thought of her noble devotion in giving up all for her and following her into seclusion; she thought of their happy life in that quiet little sea-side cottage. As all these memories rose before her the idea of Hilda being a traitor seemed more impossible than ever. But she no longer uttered any indignant remonstrance.

"I am bewildered," she said. "I can think of nothing but love and fidelity in connection with her. All our lives she has lived with me and loved me. I can not think of any imaginable motive. I can imagine that she, like myself, is the victim of some one else, but not that she can do any thing else than love me."

"Yet she wrote that letter which is the cause of all your grief. Tell me," said he, after a pause, "has she money of her own?"

"Yes—enough for her support."

"Is she your sister?"

Zillah seemed startled.

"I do not wish to intrude into your confidence—I only ask this to gain some light while I am groping in the dark."

"She is not. She is no relation. But she has lived with me all my life, and is the same as a sister."

"Does she treat you as her equal?"

"Yes," said Zillah, with some hesitation, "that is—of late."

"But you have been her superior until of late?"

"Yes."

"Would you have any objection to tell her name?"

"Yes," said Zillah; "I can not tell it. I will tell this much: Lorton is an assumed name. It belongs neither to her nor to me. My name is not Lorton."

"I knew that," said Obed Chute. "I hope you will forgive me. It was not curiosity. I wished to investigate this to the bottom; but I am satisfied—I respect your secret. Will you forgive me for the pain I have caused you?"

Zillah placed her cold hand in his, and said:

"My friend, do not speak so. It hurts me to have you ask my forgiveness."

Obed Chute's face beamed with pleasure.

"My poor child," he said, "you must go and rest yourself. Go and sleep; perhaps you will be better for it."

And Zillah dragged herself out of the room.

CHAPTER XLI.

OBED ON THE RAMPAGE.

A long illness was the immediate result of so much excitement, suffering, and grief. Gradually, however, Zillah struggled through it; and at last, under the genial sky of Southern Italy, she began to regain her usual health. The kindness of her friends was unfaltering and incessant. Through this she was saved, and it was Obed's sister who brought her back from the clutches of fever and the jaws of death. She had as tender a heart as her brother, and had come to love as a sister or a daughter this poor, friendless, childlike girl, who had been thrown upon their hands in so extraordinary a manner. Brought up in that puritanical school which is perpetually on the look-out for "special providences," she regarded Zillah's arrival among them as the most marked special providence which she had ever known, and never ceased to affirm that something wonderful was destined to come of all this. Around this faithful, noble-hearted, puritanical dame, Zillah's affections twined themselves with something like filial tenderness, and she learned in the course of her illness to love that simple, straightforward, but high-souled woman, whose love she had already won. Hitherto she had associated the practice of chivalrous principles and the grand code of honor exclusively with lofty gentlemen like the Earl and her father, or with titled dames; now, however, she learned that here, in Obed Chute, there was as fine an instinct of honor, as delicate a sentiment of loyalty to friendship, as refined a spirit of knight-errantry, as strong a zeal to succor the weak and to become the champion of the oppressed, and as profound a loathing for all that is base and mean, as in either of those grand old gentlemen by whom her character had been moulded. Had Obed Chute been born an English lord his manners might have had a finer polish, but no training known among the sons

of men could have given him a truer appreciation of all that is noble and honorable and chivalrous. This man, whose life had been passed in what Zillah considered as "vulgar trade," seemed to her to have a nature as pure and as elevated as that of the Chevalier Bayard, that hero *sans peur et sans reproche*.

Obed, as has already been seen, had a weakness for Neapolitan life, and felt in his inmost soul that strange fascination which this city possesses. He had traversed every nook and corner of Naples, and had visited, with a strange mixture of enthusiasm and practical observation, all its environs. In the course of his wanderings he had fallen in with a party of his countrymen, all of whom were kindred spirits, and who hailed his advent among them with universal appreciation. Without in any way neglecting Zillah, he joined himself to these new friends, and accompanied them in many an excursion into the country about Naples—to Capua, to Cumæ, to Pæstum, and to many other places. To some of these places it was dangerous to go in these unsettled times; but this party laughed at dangers. They had acquired a good-natured contempt for Italians and Italian courage; and as each man, in spite of the Neapolitan laws, carried his revolver, they were accustomed to venture any where with the most careless ease, and the most profound indifference to any possible danger. In fact, any approach to danger they would have hailed with joy, and to their adventurous temper the appearance of a gang of bandits would have been the greatest blessing which this land could afford.

The whole country was in a most disturbed condition. The Lombard war had diffused a deep excitement among all classes. Every day new rumors arose, and throughout the Neapolitan dominions the population were filled with strange vague desires. The government itself was demoralized—one day exerting its utmost power in the most repressive measures, and on the next recalling its own acts, and retreating in fear from the position which it had taken up. The troops were as agitated as the people. It was felt that in case of an attempt at revolution they could not be relied upon. In the midst of all other fears one was predominant, and was all comprised in one magic word—the name of that one man who alone, in our age, has shown himself able to draw nations after him, and by the spell of his presence to paralyze the efforts of kings. That one word was "Garibaldi."

What he was, or what he was to do, were things which were but little known to these ignorant Neapolitans. They simply accepted the name as the symbol of some great change by which all were to be benefited. He was, in their thoughts, half hero, half Messiah, before whom all opposing armies should melt away, and by whom all wrongs should be redressed. Through the heart of this agitated mass there penetrated the innumerable ramifications of secret societies, whose agents guided, directed, and intensified the prevalent excitement. These were the men who originated those daily rumors which threw both government and people into a fever of agitation; who taught new hopes and new desires to the most degraded population of Christendom, and inspired even the lazaroni with wild ideas of human rights—of liberty, fraternity, and equality. These agents had a far-reaching purpose, and to accomplish this they worked steadily, in all parts and among all classes, until at last the whole state was ripe for some vast revolution. Such was the condition of the people among whom Obed and his friends pursued their pleasures.

The party with which Obed had connected himself was a varied one. There were two officers from those "Yankee frigates" which he had hurled in the teeth of the police agent at the Hôtel de l'Europe; two young fellows fresh from Harvard, and on their way to Heidelberg, who had come direct from New York to Naples, and were in no hurry to leave; a Southerner, fresh from a South Carolina plantation, making his first tour in Europe; a Cincinnati lawyer; and a Boston clergyman traveling for his health, to recruit which he had been sent away by his loving congregation. With all these Obed at once fraternized, and soon became the acknowledged leader, though, as he could not speak Italian, he was compelled to delegate all quarrels with the natives to the two Heidelbergians, who had studied Italian on their way out, and had aired it very extensively since their arrival.

Having exhausted the land excursions, the party obtained a yacht, in which they intended to make the circuit of the bay. On their first voyage they went around its whole extent, and then, rounding the island of Capri, they sailed along the coast to the southeast without any very definite purpose.

The party presented a singular appearance. All were dressed in the most careless manner, consulting convenience without any regard to fashion. The Heidelbergians had made their appearance in red flannel shirts and broad-brimmed felt hats, which excited such admiration that the others at once determined to equal them. Obed, the officers, and the South Carolinian went off, and soon returned with red flannel shirts and wide-awake hats of their own, for which they soon exchanged their more correct costume. The lawyer and the clergyman compromised the matter by donning reefing jackets; and thus the whole party finally set out, and in this attire they made their cruise, with many loud laughs at the strange transformation which a change of dress had made in each other's appearance.

In this way they made the circuit of the bay, and proceeded along the coast until they came opposite to Salerno. It was already four o'clock, and as they could not get back to Naples that day they decided to land at this historic town, with the hope that they might be rewarded by some adventure. The yacht, therefore, was headed toward the town, and flew rapidly over the waves to her destination.

On rounding a headland which lay between them and the town their progress was slow. As they moved toward the harbor they sat lazily watching the white houses as they stretched along the winding beach, and the Boston clergyman, who seemed to be well up in his medieval history, gave them an account of the former glories of this place, when its university was the chief medical school of Europe, and Arabian and Jewish professors taught to Christian students the mysteries of science. With their attention thus divided between the learned disser-

tation of the clergyman and the charms of the town, they approached their destination.

It was not until they had come quite near that they noticed an unusual crowd along the shore. When they did notice it they at first supposed that it might be one of those innumerable saints' days which are so common in Italy. Now, as they drew nearer, they noticed that the attention of the crowd was turned to themselves. This excited their wonder at first, but after a time they thought that in so dull a place as Salerno the arrival of a yacht was sufficient to excite curiosity, and with this idea many jokes were bandied about. At length they approached the principal wharf of the place, and directed the yacht toward it. As they did so they noticed a universal movement on the part of the crowd, who made a rush toward the wharf, and in a short time filled it completely. Not even the most extravagant ideas of Italian laziness and curiosity could account for this intense interest in the movements of an ordinary yacht; and so our Americans soon found themselves lost in an abyss of wonder.

Why should they be so stared at? Why should the whole population of Salerno thus turn out, and make a wild rush to the wharf at which they were to land? It was strange; it was inexplicable; it was also embarrassing. Not even the strongest curiosity could account for such excitement as this.

"What 'n thunder does it all mean?" said Obed, after a long silence.

"There's something up," said the Cincinnati lawyer, sententiously.

"Perhaps it is a repetition of the landing at Naples on a grander scale," said the clergyman. "I remember when I landed there at least fifty lazaroni followed me to carry my carpet-bag."

"Fifty?" cried one of the Heidelbergians. "Why, there are five hundred after us!"

"But these are not lazaroni," said Obed. "Look at that crowd! Did you ever see a more respectable one?"

In truth, the crowd was in the highest degree respectable. There were some workmen, and some lazaroni. But the greater number consisted of well-dressed people, among whom were intermingled priests and soldiers, and even women. All these, whatever their rank, bore in their faces an expression of the intensest curiosity and interest. The expression was unmistakable, and as the yacht came nearer, those on board were able to see that they were the objects of no common attention. If they had doubted this, this doubt was soon dispelled; for as the yacht grazed the wharf a movement took place among the crowd, and a confused cry of applause arose.

For such a welcome as this the yachting party were certainly not prepared. All looked up in amazement, with the exception of Obed. He alone was found equal to the occasion. Without stopping to consider what the cause of such a reception might be, he was simply conscious of an act of public good-will, and prepared to respond in a fitting manner. He was standing on the prow at the time, and drawing his tall form to its full height, he regarded the crowd for a moment with a benignant smile; after which he removed his hat and bowed with great *empressement*.

At this there arose another shout of applause from the whole crowd, which completed the amazement of the tourists. Meanwhile the yacht swung up close to the wharf, and as there was nothing else to be done they prepared to land, leaving her in charge of her crew, which consisted of several sailors from one of the American frigates. The blue shirts of these fellows formed a pleasing contrast to the red shirts and reefing jackets of the others, and the crowd on the wharf seemed to feel an indiscriminate admiration for the crew as well as for the masters. Such attentions were certainly somewhat embarrassing, and presented to these adventurous spirits a novel kind of difficulty; but whether novel or not, there was now no honorable escape from it, and they had to encounter it boldly by plunging into the midst of the crowd. So they landed—eight as singular figures as ever disturbed the repose of this peaceful town of Salerno. Obed headed the procession, dressed in a red shirt with black trowsers, and a scarf tied round his waist, while a broad-brimmed felt hat shaded his expansive forehead. His tall form, his broad shoulders, his sinewy frame, made him by far the most conspicuous member of this company, and attracted to him the chief admiration of the spectators. Low, murmured words arose as he passed amidst them, expressive of the profound impression which had been produced by the sight of his magnificent physique. After him came the others in Indian file; for the crowd was dense, and only parted sufficiently to allow of the progress of one man at a time. The Southerner came next to Obed, then the Heidelbergians, then the naval officers, while the clergyman and the Cincinnati lawyer, in their picturesque pea-jackets, brought up the rear. Even in a wide-awake American town such a company would have attracted attention; how much more so in this sleepy, secluded, quiet, Italian town! especially at such a time, when all men every where were on the look-out for great enterprises.

Obed marched on with his friends till they left the wharf and were able to walk on together more closely. The crowd followed. The Americans took the middle of the street, and walked up into the town through what seemed the principal thoroughfare. The crowd pressed after them, showing no decrease whatever in their ardent curiosity, yet without making any noisy demonstrations. They seemed like men who were possessed by some conviction as to the character of these strangers, and were in full sympathy with them, but were waiting to see what they might *do*. The Americans, on their side, were more and more surprised at every step, and could not imagine any cause whatever for so very singular a reception. They did not even know whether to view it as a hostile demonstration, or as a sort of triumphant reception. They could not imagine what they had done which might merit either the one or the other. All that was left for them to do, therefore, they did; and that means, they accepted the situation, and walked along intent only upon the most prosaic of purposes—the discovery of a hotel. At length, after a few minutes' walk, they found the object of their search in a large stuccò edifice which bore the proud title of "Hôtel de l'Univers" in French. Into this they turned,

seeking refuge and refreshment. The crowd without respected their seclusion. They did not pour into the hotel and fill it to overflowing from top to bottom, but simply stood outside, in front, in a densely packed mass, from which arose constantly the deep hum of earnest, animated, and eager conversation.

On entering they were accosted by the landlord, who received them with the utmost obsequiousness, and a devotion which was absolute. He informed them that the whole hotel was at their disposal, and wished to know at what time their excellencies would be pleased to dine. Their excellencies informed him, through the medium of the Heidelbergians, that they would be pleased to dine as soon as possible; whereupon the landlord led them to a large upper room and bowed himself out.

Their room looked out upon the street. There was a balcony in front of the windows; and, as they sat there waiting, they could see the dense crowd as it stood in front of the hotel—quiet, orderly, waiting patiently; yet waiting for what? That was the problem. It was so knotty a problem that it engaged all their thoughts and discussions while they were waiting for dinner, and while they were eating their dinner. At last that solemn meal was over, and they arose refreshed; but the peaceful satisfaction that generally ensues after such an important meal was now very seriously disturbed, in their case, by the singular nature of their situation. There was the crowd outside still, though it was already dusk.

"I think," said Obed, "that I'll step out and see what is going on. I'll just look around, you know."

Saying this, Obed passed through the open window, and went out on the balcony. His appearance was the cause of an immense sensation. For a moment the crowd was hushed, and a thousand eyes were fixed in awe and admiration upon his colossal form. Then the silence was suddenly broken by loud, long, and wild acclamations, "*Viva la Liberta!*" "*Viva la Republica!*" "*Viva l'Italia!*" "*Viva Vittore Emmanuele!*" "*Viva Garibaldi!*"

This last word was caught up with a kind of mad enthusiasm, and passed from mouth to mouth till it drowned all other cries.

"What 'n thunder's all this?" cried Obed, putting his head into the room, and looking at the Heidelbergians. "See here—come out here," he continued, "and find out what in the name of goodness it all means, for I'll be durned if I can make head or tail of it."

At this appeal the Heidelbergians stepped out, and after them came the naval officers, while the rest followed, till the whole eight stood on the balcony.

Their appearance was greeted with a thunder of applause.

Obed knew not what it all meant, nor did any of the others; but as he was the acknowledged leader he felt upon him the responsibility of his situation, and so, with this feeling animating him, he responded to the salutation of the crowd by a low bow.

It was now dusk, and the twilight of this southern climate was rapidly deepening, when suddenly the Americans were aware of a sound in the distance like the galloping of horses. The sound seemed to strike the crowd below at the same moment. Cries arose, and they fell back quickly on either side of the road, leaving a broad path in their midst. The Americans did not have a long time left to them for conjecture or for wonder. The sounds drew nearer and nearer, until at last, through the gloom, a body of dragoons were plainly seen galloping down the street. They dashed through the crowd, they reined in their horses in front of the hotel, and, at the sharp word of command from their leader, a number of them dismounted, and followed him inside, while the rest remained without.

The crowd stood breathless and mute. The Americans saw in this a very singular variation to the events of the evening, and, as they could no more account for this than for those which had preceded it, they waited to see the end.

They did not have to wait long.

A noise in the room which they had left roused them. Looking in they saw about a dozen dragoons with the captain and the landlord. The dragoons had arranged themselves in line at the word of command, and the landlord stood with a terror-stricken face beside the captain.

"Ah!" said Obed, who had looked through the window into the room, "this looks serious. There's some absurd mistake somewhere, but just now it does seem as though they want us, so I move that we go in and show ourselves."

Saying this he entered the room, followed by the others, and the eight Americans ranged themselves quietly opposite the dragoons. The sight of these red-shirted strangers produced a very peculiar effect on the soldiers, as was evident by their faces and their looks; and the captain, as he regarded the formidable proportions of Obed, seemed somewhat overawed. But he soon overcame his emotion, and, stepping forward, he exclaimed:

"Siete nostri prigionieri. Rendetevi."

"What's that he says?" asked Obed.

"He says we're his prisoners," said one of the Heidelbergians, "and calls on us to surrender."

"Tell him," said Obed, unconsciously parodying Leonidas—"Tell him to come on and take us."

The Heidelbergian translated this verbatim.

The captain looked puzzled.

"Boys," said Obed, "you may as well get your revolvers ready."

At this quiet hint every one of the Americans, including even the Boston clergyman, drew forth his revolver, holding it carelessly, yet in such a very handy fashion that the captain of the dragoons looked aghast.

"I will have no resistance," said he. "Surrender, or you will be shot down."

"Ha, ha!" said the Heidelbergian. "Do you see our revolvers? Do you think that we are the men to surrender?"

"I have fifty dragoons outside," said the officer.

"Very well, we have forty-eight shots to your fifty," said the Heidelbergian, whose Italian, on this occasion, "came out uncommonly strong," as Obed afterward said when the conversation was narrated to him.

"I am commanded to arrest you," said the officer.

"Well, go back and say that you tried, and couldn't do it," said the Heidelbergian.

"Your blood will be on your own heads."

"Pardon me; some of it will be on yours, and some of your own blood also," retorted the Heidelbergian, mildly.

"Advance!" cried the officer to his soldiers. "Arrest these men."

The soldiers looked at their captain, then at the Americans, then at their captain again, then at the Americans, and the end of it was that they did not move.

"Arrest them!" roared the officer.

The Americans stood opposite with their revolvers leveled. The soldiers stood still. They would not obey.

"My friend," said the Heidelbergian, "if your men advance, you yourself will be the first to fall, for I happen to have you covered by my pistol. I may as well tell you that it has six shots, and if the first fails, the second will not."

The officer turned pale. He ordered his men to remain, and went out. After a few moments he returned with twelve more dragoons. The Americans still stood watchful, with their revolvers ready, taking aim.

"You see," cried the officer, excitedly, "that you are overpowered. There are as many men outside. For the last time I call on you to surrender. If you do not I will give no quarter. You need not try to resist."

"What is it that he says?" asked Obed.

The Heidelbergian told him.

Obed laughed.

"Ask him why he does not come and take us," said he, grimly. "We have already given him leave to do so."

The Heidelbergian repeated these words. The captain, in a fury, ordered his men to advance. The Americans fully expected an attack, and stood ready to pour in a volley at the first movement on the part of the enemy. But the enemy did not move. The soldiers stood motionless. They did not seem afraid. They seemed rather as if they were animated by some totally different feeling. It had been whispered already that the Neapolitan army was unreliable. This certainly looked like it.

"Cowards!" cried the captain, who seemed to think that their inaction arose from fear. "You will suffer for this, you scoundrels! Then, if you are afraid to advance, make ready! present! fire!"

His command might as well have been addressed to the winds. The guns of the soldiers stood by their sides. Not one of them raised his piece. The captain was thunder-struck; yet his surprise was not greater than that of the Americans when this was hastily explained to them by the Heidelbergians. Evidently there was disaffection among the soldiers of his Majesty of Naples when brought into the presence of *Red Shirts*.

The captain was so overwhelmed by this discovery that he stood like one paralyzed, not knowing what to do. This passive disobedience on the part of his men was a thing so unexpected that he was left helpless, without resources.

Meanwhile the crowd outside had been intensely excited. They had witnessed the arrival of the dragoons. They had seen them dismount and enter the hotel after the captain. They had seen the captain come down after another detachment. They had known nothing of what was going on inside, but conjectured that a desperate struggle was inevitable between the Red Shirts and the dragoons. As an unarmed crowd they could offer no active intervention, so they held their peace for a time, waiting in breathless suspense for the result. The result seemed long delayed. The troopers did not seem to gain that immediate victory over the Red Shirts which had been fearfully anticipated. Every moment seemed to postpone such a victory, and render it impossible. Every moment restored the courage of the crowd, which at first had been panic-stricken. Low murmurs passed among them, which deepened into words of remonstrance, and strengthened into cries of sympathy for the Red Shirts; until, at last, these cries arose to shouts, and the shouts arose wild and high, penetrating to that upper room where the assailants confronted their cool antagonists.

The cries had an ominous sound.

"*Viva la Liberta!*" "*Viva la Republica!*" "*Viva Garibaldi!*"

At the name *Garibaldi*, a wild yell of applause resounded wide and high—a long, shrill yell, and the name was taken up in a kind of mad fervor till the shout rose to a frenzy, and nothing was heard but the confused outcries of a thousand discordant voices, all uttering that one grand name, "*Garibaldi!*" "*Garibaldi!*" "*Garibaldi!*"

The Americans heard it. What connection there was between themselves and Garibaldi they did not then see, but they saw that somehow the people of Salerno had associated them with the hero of Italy, and were sympathizing with them. Obed Chute himself saw this, and understood this, as that cry came thundering to his ears. He turned to his friends.

"Boys," said he, "we came here for a dinner and a night's rest. We've got the dinner, but the night's rest seems to be a little remote. There's such an infernal row going on all around that, if we want to sleep this blessed night, we'll have to take to the yacht again, and turn in there, sailor fashion. So I move that we adjourn to that place, and put out to sea."

His proposal was at once accepted without hesitation.

"Very well," said Obed. "Now follow me. March!"

With his revolver in his extended hand, Obed strode toward the door, followed by the others. The dragoons drew back and allowed them to pass out without resistance. They descended the stairs into the hall. As they appeared at the doorway they were recognized by the crowd, and a wild shout of triumph arose, in which nothing was conspicuous but the name of Garibaldi. The mounted dragoons outside did not attempt to resist them. They looked away, and did not seem to see them at all. The crowd had it all their own way.

Through the crowd Obed advanced, followed by his friends, and led the way toward the yacht. The crowd followed. They cheered; they shouted; they yelled out defiance at the king; they threw aside all restraint, and sang the Italian version of the "Marseillaise." A wild

enthusiasm pervaded all, as though some great victory had been won, or some signal triumph achieved. But amidst all their shouts and cries and applause and songs one word was pre-eminent, and that one word was the name of "*Garibaldi!*"

But the Americans made no response. They marched on quietly to their yacht, and pushed off from the wharf. A loud, long cheer followed them from the crowd, which stood there watching their departure; and, as the yacht moved away, cheer after cheer arose, which gradually died away in the distance.

They passed that night on the sea instead of at the hotel at Salerno. But they did not have much sleep. Their wonderful adventure formed the theme of discussion all night long. And at last the only conclusion which they could come to was this, that the red-shirted strangers had been mistaken for Garibaldini; that Obed Chute had been accepted as Garibaldi himself; and, finally, that the subjects of the king of Naples, and his soldiers also, were in a fearful state of disaffection.

Not long after, when Garibaldi himself passed through this very town, the result confirmed the conjectures of these Americans.

CHAPTER XLII.

ANOTHER REVELATION.

TIME passed on, and Zillah once more regained something like her old spring and elasticity; yet the sadness of her situation was noway relaxed. In addition to the griefs of the past, there now arose the problem of the future. What was she to do? Was she to go on thus forever with these kind friends? or was she to leave them? The subject was a painful and a perplexing one, and always brought before her the utter loneliness of her position with the most distressing distinctness. Generally she fought against such feelings, and tried to dismiss such thoughts, but it was difficult to drive them from her mind.

At length it happened that all her funds were exhausted, and she felt the need of a fresh supply. So she conferred with Obed Chute, and told him the name of her London bankers, after which he drew out a check for her for a hundred pounds, which she signed. The draft was then forwarded.

A fortnight passed away. It was during this interval that Obed had his famous Salerno expedition, which he narrated to Zillah on his return, to her immense delight. Never in his life had Obed taken such pleasure in telling a story as on this occasion. Zillah's eager interest, her animated face, her sparkling eyes, all encouraged him to hope that there was yet some spirit left in her in spite of her sorrows; and at length, at the narration of the reception of the Neapolitan's order to surrender, Zillah burst into a fit of laughter that was childish in its *abandon* and heartiness.

About a week or ten days after this, Obed came home one day with a very serious face. Zillah noticed it at once, and asked him anxiously if any thing had happened.

"My poor child," said he, "I'm afraid that there is more trouble in store for you. I feared as much some time ago, but I had to wait to see if my fears were true."

Zillah regarded him fearfully, not knowing what to think of such an ominous beginning. Her heart told her that it had some reference to Hilda. Had he found out any thing about her? Was she ill? Was she dying? These were her thoughts, but she dared not put them into words.

"I've kept this matter to myself till now," continued Obed; "but I do not intend to keep it from you any longer. I've spoken to sister about it, and she thinks that you'd better know it. At any rate," he added, "it isn't as bad as some things you've borne; only it comes on top of the rest, and seems to make them worse."

Zillah said not a word, but stood awaiting in fear this new blow.

"Your draft," said Obed, "has been returned."

"My draft returned?" said Zillah, in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"I will tell you all I know," said Obed. "There is villainy at the bottom of this, as you will see. Your draft came back about ten days ago. I said nothing to you about it, but took it upon myself to write for explanations. Last evening I received this"—and he drew a letter from his pocket. "I've meditated over it, and shown it to my sister, and we both think that there are depths to this dark plot against you which none of us as yet have even begun to fathom. I've also forwarded an account of this and a copy of this letter to the police at Marseilles, and to the police here, to assist them in their investigations. I'm afraid the police here won't do much, they're so upset by their panic about Garibaldi."

As Obed ended he handed the letter to Zillah, who opened it without a word, and read as follows:

"LONDON, *September* 10, 1859.

"SIR,—In answer to your favor of 7th instant, we beg leave to state that up to the 15th of June last we held stock and deposits from Miss Ella Lorton—*i. e.*, consols, thirty thousand pounds (£30,000); also cash, twelve hundred and seventy-five pounds ten shillings (£1275 10*s.*). On the 15th of June last the above-mentioned Miss Ella Lorton appeared in person, and, with her own check, drew out the cash balance. On the 17th June she came in person and withdrew the stock, in consols, which she had deposited with us, amounting to thirty thousand pounds (£30,000) as aforesaid. That it was Miss Ella Lorton herself there is no doubt; for it was the same lady who deposited the funds, and who has sent checks to us from time to time. The party you speak of, who sent the check from Naples, must be an imposter, and we recommend you to hand her over to the police.

"We have the honor to be, Sir, your most obedient servants, TILTON AND BROWNE.

"OBED CHUTE, Esq."

On reading this Zillah fell back into a chair as though she had been shot, and sat looking at this fatal sheet with wild eyes and haggard face. Obed made an effort to cry for help, but it sounded like a groan. His sister came running in, and seeing Zillah's condition, she took her in her arms.

"Poor child! poor sweet child!" she cried.

"HIS SISTER, SEEING ZILLAH'S CONDITION, TOOK HER IN HER ARMS."

"It's too much! It's too much! She will die if this goes on."

But Zillah rapidly roused herself. It was no soft mood that was over her now; it was not a broken heart that was now threatening her. This letter seemed to throw a flood of light over her dark and mysterious persecution, which in an instant put an end to all those tender longings after her loved Hilda which had consumed her. Now her eyes flashed, and the color which had left her cheeks flushed back again, mounting high with the full sweep of her indignant passion. She started to her feet, her hands clenched, and her brows frowning darkly.

"You are right," she said to Obed, in a low, stern voice. "I am betrayed—and she—*she alone* has been my betrayer. She! my sister! the one who lived on my father's bounty; who was my companion in childhood; who shared my bed; who had all my love and trust—she has betrayed me! Ah, well," she added, with a long sigh; "since it is so, it is best for me to know it. Do not be grieved, dear friends. Do not look so sadly and so tenderly at me. I know your loving hearts. You, at least, do not look as though you believed me to be an impostor."

And she held out her hands to the brother and sister. Obed took that little hand which she extended, and pressed it reverently to his lips.

"Sit down, my poor child," said Miss Chute, tenderly. "You are excited. Try to be calm, if you can."

"I am calm, and I will be calm," said Zillah, faintly.

"Come," said Obed. "We will talk no more about it now. To-morrow, or next day, or next week, we will talk about it. You must rest. You must drive out, or sail out, or do something. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll order the yacht and take you to Salerno."

Zillah looked at him with a faint smile, appreciating his well-meant reference to that famous town, and Obed left her with his sister.

A week passed, and Zillah was not allowed to speak of this subject. But all the time she was oppressed by a sense of her utterly desperate situation. As long as she had believed herself rich she had not felt altogether helpless; but now!—now she found herself a pauper, alone in the wide world, a dependent on the kindness of these noble-hearted friends. What could she do? This could not go on forever. What could she do—she, a girl without resources? How could she ever support herself? What would become of her?

Could she go back to that home from which she had fled? Never! That thought came once, and was instantly scouted as impossible. Sooner than do that she would die of starvation. What, then, could she do? Live on as a burden to these kind friends? Alas! how could she? She thought wildly of being a governess; but what could she teach?—she, who had idled away nearly all her life. Then she thought of trying to get back her money from those who had robbed her. But how could this be done?

For, to do this, it would be necessary to obtain the help of Obed Chute; and, in that case, she would have to tell him all. And could she do this? Could she reveal to another the secret sorrow of her life? Could she tell him about their fatal marriage; about the Earl; about Guy's letter, and her flight from home? No; these things were too sacred to be divulged to any one, and the very idea of making them known was intolerable. But if she began to seek after Hilda it would be necessary to tell her true name, at least to Obed Chute, and all about her, a thing which would involve the disclosure of all her secret. It could not be done. Hilda had betrayed her, sought out her life, and robbed her—of this there no longer remained any doubt; and she was helpless; she could neither seek after her rights, nor endeavor to obtain redress for her wrongs.

At length she had a conversation with Obed Chute about her draft. She told him that when she first went to Tenby her sister had persuaded her to withdraw all her money from her former bankers and deposit it with Messrs. Tilton and Browne. Hilda herself had gone to London to have it done. She told Obed that they were living in seclusion, that Hilda had charge of the finances, and drew all the checks. Of course Messrs. Tilton and Browne had been led to believe that she was the Ella Lorton who had deposited the money. In this way it was easy for her, after getting her sister out of the way, to obtain the money herself.

After Obed Chute heard this he remained silent for a long time.

"My poor child," said he at last, in tones full of pity, "you could not imagine once what motive this Hilda could have for betraying you. Here you have motive enough. It is a very coarse one; but yet men have been betraying one another for less than this since the world began. There was once a certain Judas who carried out a plan of betrayal for a far smaller figure. But tell me. Have you never associated Gualtier and Hilda in your thoughts as partners in this devilish plot?"

"I see now that they must have been," said Zillah. "I can believe nothing else."

"You have said that Gualtier was in attendance on you for years?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever notice any thing like friendship between these two?"

"She always seemed to hold herself so far above him that I do not see how they could have had any understanding."

"Did he seem to speak to her more than to you?"

"Not at all. I never noticed it. He accompanied her to London, though, when she went about the money."

"That looks like confidence. And then she sent him to take you to Naples to put you out of the way?"

Zillah sighed.

"Tell me. Do you think she could have loved Gualtier?"

"It seems absurd. Any thing like love between those two is impossible."

"It's my full and firm conviction," said Obed Chute, after deep thought, "that this Gualtier gained your friend's affections, and he has been the prime mover in this. Both of them must be deep ones, though. Yet I calculate she is only a tool in his hands. Women will do any thing for love. She has sacrificed you to him. It isn't so bad a case as it first looked."

"Not so bad!" said Zillah, in wonder. "What is worse than to betray a friend?"

"When a woman betrays a friend for the sake of a lover she only does what women have been engaged in doing ever since the world began. This Gualtier has betrayed you both—first by winning your friend's love, and then by using her against you. And that is the smart game which he has played so well as to net the handsome figure of £30,000 sterling—one hundred and fifty thousand dollars—besides that balance of £1200 and upward—six thousand dollars more."

Such was Obed Chute's idea, and Zillah accepted it as the only true solution. Any other

"HIS SISTER, SEEING ZILLAH'S CONDITION, TOOK HER IN HER ARMS"

solution would force her to believe that Hilda had been a hypocrite all her life—that her devotion was a sham, and her love a mockery. Such a thing seemed incredible, and it seemed far more natural to her that Hilda had acted from some mad impulse of love in obedience to the strong temptation held out by a lover. Yes, she thought, she had placed herself in his power, and did whatever he told her, without thinking of the consequences. The plot, then, must be all Gualtier's. Hilda herself never, never, never could have formed such a plan against one who loved her. She could not have known what she was doing. She could not have deliberately sold her life and robbed her. So Zillah tried to think; but, amidst these thoughts, there arose the memory of that letter from Naples—that picture of the voyage, every word of which showed such devilish ingenuity, and such remorseless pertinacity in deceiving. Love may do much, and tempt to much, she thought; but, after all, could such a letter have emanated from any one whose heart was not utterly and wholly bad and corrupt? All this was terrible to Zillah.

"If I could but redress your wrongs," said Obed, one day—"if you would only give me permission, I would start to-morrow for England, and I would track this pair of villains till I compelled them to disgorge their plunder, and one of them, at least, should make acquaintance with the prison hulks or Botany Bay. But you will not let me," he added, reproachfully.

Zillah looked at him imploringly.

"I have a secret," said she, "a secret which I dare not divulge. It involves others. I have sacrificed every thing for this. I can not mention it even to you. And now all is lost, and I have nothing. There is no help for it, none." She seemed to be speaking to herself. "For then," she continued, "if they were hunted down, names would come out, and then all would be known. And rather than have all known"—her voice grew higher and sterner as she spoke, expressing a desperate resolve—"rather than have all known, I would die—yes, by a death as terrible as that which stared me in the face when I was drifting in the schooner!"

Obed Chute looked at her. Pity was on his face. He held out his hand and took hers.

"It shall not be known," said he. "Keep your secret. The time will come some day when you will be righted. Trust in God, my child."

The time passed on, but Zillah was now a prey to this new trouble. How could she live? She was penniless. Could she consent to remain thus a burden on kind friends like these? These thoughts agitated her incessantly, preying upon her mind, and never leaving her by night or by day. She was helpless. How could she live? By what means could she hope to get a living?

Her friends saw her melancholy, but attributed it all to the greater sorrows through which she had passed. Obed Chute thought that the best cure was perpetual distraction. So he busied himself with arranging a never-ending series of expeditions to all the charming environs of Naples. Pompeii and Herculaneum opened before them the wonders of the ancient world. Vesuvius was scaled, and its crater revealed its awful depths. Baiæ, Misenum, and Puzzuoli were explored. Paestum showed them its eternal temples. They lingered on the beach at Salerno. They stood where never-ending spring abides, and never-withering flowers, in the vale of Sorrento—the fairest spot on earth; best representative of a lost Paradise. They sailed over every part of that glorious bay, where earth and air and sea all combine to bring into one spot all that this world contains of beauty and sublimity, of joyousness and loveliness, of radiance and of delight. Yet still, in spite of all this, the dull weight of melancholy could not be removed, but never ceased to weigh her down.

At length Zillah could control her feelings no longer. One day, softened by the tender sympathy and watchful anxiety of these loving friends, she yielded to the generous promptings of her heart and told them her trouble.

"I am penniless," she said, as she concluded her confession. "You are too generous, and it is your very generosity that makes it bitter for me to be a mere dependent. You are so generous that I will ask you to get me something to do. I know you will. There, I have told you all, and I feel happier already."

As she ended a smile passed over the face of Obed Chute and his sister. The relief which they felt was infinite. And this was all!

"My child," said Obed Chute, tenderly, "there are twenty different things that I can say, each of which would put you perfectly at ease. I will content myself, however, with merely one or two brief remarks. In the first place allow me to state that you are not penniless. Do you think that you are going to lose all your property? No—by the Eternal! no! I, Obed Chute, do declare that I will get it back some day. So dismiss your fears, and dry your tears, as the hymn-book says. Moreover, in the second place, you speak of being a dependent and a burden. I can hardly trust myself to speak in reply to that. I will leave that to sister. For my own part, I will merely say that you are our sunshine—you make our family circle bright as gold. To lose you, my child, would be—well, I won't say what, only when you leave us you may leave an order at the nearest stone-cutter's for a tombstone for Obed Chute."

He smiled as he spoke—his great rugged features all irradiated by a glow of enthusiasm and of happiness.

"But I feel so dependent—such a burden," pleaded Zillah.

"If that is the case," said Obed Chute, "then your feelings shall be consulted. I will employ you. You shall have an honorable position. Among us the best ladies in the land become teachers. President Fillmore's daughter taught a school in New England. It is my purpose now to engage you as governess."

"As governess?"

"Yes, for my children."

"But I don't know any thing."

"I don't care—I'm going to engage you as governess all the same. Sister teaches them the rudiments. What I want you to teach them is music."

"Music? I'm such a wretched player."

"You play well enough for me—well enough to teach them; and the beauty of it is, even if you don't play well now, you soon will. Doesn't Franklin or somebody say that one learns by teaching?"

Zillah's face spoke unutterable gratitude.

"This," said Obed Chute, "is purely a business transaction. I'll only give you the usual payment—say five hundred dollars a year, and found."

"And—what?"

"Found—that is, board, you know, and clothing, of course, also. Is it a bargain?"

"Oh, my best friend! how can I thank you? What can I say?"

"Say! why, call me again your 'best friend;' that is all the thanks I want."

So the engagement was made, and Zillah became a music-teacher.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE REPORT.

During Lord Chetwynde's absence Hilda received constant communications from Gualtier. He had not very much to tell her, though his watchfulness was incessant. He had contrived to follow Lord Chetwynde to London, under different disguises, and with infinite difficulty; and also to put up at the same house. Lord Chetwynde had not the remotest idea that he was watched, and took no pains to conceal any of his motions. Indeed, to a mind like his, the idea of keeping any thing secret, or of going out of his way to avoid notice, never suggested itself. He was perfectly open and free from disguise. He stopped at the Hastings House, an elegant and quiet hotel, avoided the clubs, and devoted himself altogether to business. At this house Gualtier stopped also, but could find out nothing about Lord Chetwynde's business. He could only learn this much, that Lord Chetwynde went every day, at eleven o'clock, to the office of his solicitors, Messrs. Pendergrast Brothers, with whom he was closeted for an hour or more. Evidently there was some very important business between them; but what that business was, or to whom it might have reference, was a perfect mystery to Gualtier. This was about the sum and substance of the information which his letters conveyed to the anxious Hilda.

For her part, every thing which Gualtier mentioned about Lord Chetwynde was read by her with eager curiosity. She found herself admiring the grand calm of this man whom she loved, this splendid carelessness, this frank and open demeanor. That she herself was cunning and wily, formed no obstacle to her appreciation of frankness in others; perhaps, indeed, the absence of those qualities in herself made her admire them in others, since they were qualities which she could never hope to gain. Whatever his motive or purpose might be, he was now seeking to carry it out in the most open manner, never thinking of concealment. She was working in the dark; he was acting in the broad light of day. Her path, as she looked back upon it, wound on tortuously amidst basenesses and treacheries and crimes; his was straight and clear, like the path of the just man's—not dark, but rather a shining light, where all was open to the gaze of the world. And what communion could there be between one like him and one like her? Could any cunning on her part impose upon him? Could she ever conceal from him her wily and tortuous nature? Could he not easily discover it? Would not his clear, open, honest eyes see through and through the mask of deceit with which she concealed her true nature? There was something in his gaze which she never could face—something which had a fearful significance to her—something which told her that she was known to him, and that all her character lay open before him, with all its cunning, its craft, its baseness, and its wickedness. No arts or wiles of hers could avail to blind him to these things. This she knew and felt, but still she hoped against hope, and entertained vague expectations of some final understanding between them.

But what was the business on which he was engaged? What was it that thus led him so constantly to his solicitors? This was the problem that puzzled her. Various solutions suggested themselves. One was that he was merely anxious to see about breaking the entail so as to pay her back the money which General Pomeroy had advanced. This he had solemnly promised. Perhaps his long search through his father's papers had reference to this, and his business with his solicitors concerned this, and this only. This seemed natural. But there was also another solution to the problem. It was within the bounds of possibility that he was taking measures for a divorce. How he could obtain one she did not see, but he might be trying to do so. She knew nothing of the divorce law, but had a general idea that nothing except crime or cruelty could avail to break the bonds of marriage. That Lord Chetwynde was fixed in his resolve to break all ties between them was painfully evident to her; and whatever his immediate purpose might now be, she saw plainly that it could only have reference to this separation. It meant that, and nothing else. He abhorred her, and was determined to get rid of her at all hazards. This she plainly saw.

At length, after a few weeks' absence, Gualtier returned. Hilda, full of impatience, sent for him to the morning-room almost as soon as he had arrived, and went there to wait for his appearance. She did not have to wait long. In a few minutes Gualtier made his appearance, obsequious and deferential as usual.

"You are back alone," said she, as she greeted him.

"Yes; Lord Chetwynde is coming back to-morrow or next day, and I thought it better for me to come back first so as to see you before he came."

"Have you found out any thing more?"

"No, my lady. In my letters I explained the nature of the case. I made all the efforts I could to get at the bottom of this business, and so find out what you called the purpose of his life. But you see what insuperable obstacles were in the way. It was absolutely impossible for me to find out any thing in particular about his affairs. I could not possibly gain access to his papers. I tried to gain information from one of the clerks of Pendergrast—formed an acquaintance with him, gave him a dinner, and succeeded in getting him drunk; but even that was of no avail. The fellow was communicative enough, but the trouble was he didn't know any thing himself about this thing, and had no more knowledge of Lord Chetwynde's business

or purposes than I myself had. I have done all that was possible for a man in my situation, and grieve deeply that I have nothing more definite to communicate."

"You have done admirably," said Hilda; "nothing more was possible. I only wished you to watch, and you have watched to good purpose. This much is evident, from your reports, that Lord Chetwynde has some all-engrossing purpose. What it is can not be known now, but must be known some day. At present I must be content with the knowledge that this purpose exists."

"I have formed some conjectures," said Gualtier.

"On what grounds? On any other than those which you have made known to me?"

"No. You know all."

"Never mind, then. I also have formed conjectures, and have a larger and broader ground on which to build them. What I want is not conjectures of any kind, but facts. If you have any more facts to communicate, I should like very much to hear them."

"Alas, my lady, I have already communicated to you all the facts that I know."

Hilda was silent for some time.

"You never spoke to Lord Chetwynde, I suppose?" said she at length.

"Oh no, my lady; I did not venture to come into communication with him at all."

"Did he ever see you?"

"He certainly cast his eyes on me, once or twice, but without any recognition in them. I really don't think that he is conscious of the existence of a person like me."

"Don't be too sure of that. Lord Chetwynde is one who can see every thing without appearing to see it. His eye can take in at one glance the minutest details. He is a man who is quite capable of making the discovery that you were the steward of Chetwynde. What measure did you take to avoid discovery?"

Gualtier smiled.

"The measures which I took were such that it would have puzzled Fouché himself to penetrate my disguise. I rode in the same compartment with him, all the way to London, dressed as an elderly widow."

"A widow?"

"Yes; with a thick black veil, and a very large umbrella. It is simply impossible that he could penetrate my disguise, for the veil was too thick to show my features."

"But the hotel?"

"At the hotel I was a Catholic priest, from Novara, on my way to America. I wore spectacles, with dark glasses. No friend could have recognized me, much less a stranger."

"But if you went with the clerks of Pendergrast, that was an odd disguise."

"Oh, when I went with them, I dropped that. I became an American naval officer, belonging to the ship *Niagara*, which was then in London. I wore a heavy beard and mustache, and talked through my nose. Besides, I would drink nothing but whisky and sherry cobblers. My American trip proved highly advantageous."

"And do you feel confident that he has not recognized you?"

"Confident! Recognition was utterly impossible. It would have required my nearest friend or relative to have recognized me, through such disguises. Besides, my face is one which can very easily be disguised. I have not strongly marked features. My face can easily serve for an Italian priest, or an American naval officer. I am always careful to choose only such parts as nature has adapted me for."

"And Lord Chetwynde is coming back?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-morrow, or next day."

"I wonder how long he will stay?"

"That is a thing which no one can find out so well as yourself."

Hilda was silent.

"My lady," said Gualtier, after a long pause.

"Well?"

"You know how ready I am to serve you."

"Yes," said Hilda, dreamily.

"If this man is in your way he can be removed, as others have been removed," said Gualtier, in a low voice. "Some of them have been removed by means of my assistance. Is this man in your way? Is he? Shall I help you? For when he goes away again I can become his valet. I can engage myself, bring good recommendations, and find employment from him, which will bring me into close contact. Then, if you find him in your way, I can remove the obstacle."

Hilda's eyes blazed with a lurid light. She looked at Gualtier like a wrathful demon. The words which she spoke came hissing out, hot and fierce:

"Curse you! You do not know what you are saying. I would rather lose a thousand such as you than lose *him!* I would rather die myself than have one hair of his head injured!"

Gualtier looked at her, transfixed with amazement. Then his head sank down. These words crushed him.

"Can I ever hope for forgiveness?" he faltered at last. "I misunderstood you. I am your slave. I—I only wished to serve you."

Hilda waved her hand.

"You do not understand," said she, as she rose. "Some day you will understand all."

"Then I will wait," said Gualtier, humbly. "I have waited for years. I can still wait. I only live for you. Forgive me."

Hilda looked away, and Gualtier sat, looking thoughtfully and sadly at her.

"There is one thing," said he, "which you were fortunate to think of. You guarded against a danger which I did not anticipate."

"Ah!" said Hilda, roused by the mention of danger. "What is that?"

"The discovery of so humble a person as myself. Thanks to you, my assumed name has saved me. But at the same time it led to an embarrassing position, from which I only escaped by my own wit."

"What do you allude to?" asked Hilda, with languid curiosity.

"Oh, it's the doctor. You know he has been attending Mrs. Hart. Well, some time ago, before I left for London, he met me, and talked about things in general. Whenever he meets me he likes to get up a conversation, and I generally avoid him; but this time I couldn't. After a time, with a great appearance of concern, he said:

"I RODE WI

"'I am sorry t
are about to be su
"'Superseded!
mean?'
"'I hear from
that there is a new

"I RODE WITH HIM ALL THE WAY TO LONDON, DRESSED AS AN ELDERLY WIDOW."

"'I am sorry to hear, Mr. Gualtier, that you are about to be superseded.'

"'Superseded!' said I. 'What do you mean?'

"'I hear from some gossip of the servants that there is a new steward.'

"'A new steward! This is the first that I have heard of it,' said I. 'I am the only steward here.'

"'This one,' said he, 'is—a—Mr. M'Kenzie.'

"'M'Kenzie!' said I, instantaneously—

'M'Kenzie!' And I laughed. 'Why, I am Mr. M'Kenzie.'

"'You!' said he, in utter amazement. 'Isn't your name Gualtier?'

"'Oh no,' said I; 'that is a name which I adopted, when a music-teacher, for professional purposes. Foreign names are always liked better than native ones. My real name is M'Kenzie. The late Earl knew all about it, and so does Lady Chetwynde.'

"The doctor looked a little puzzled, but at last accepted my explanation and went off. Still I don't like the look of the thing."

"No," said Hilda, who had listened with no great interest, "it's not pleasant. But, after all, there was no danger even if he had thought you an impostor."

"Pardon me, my lady; but doctors are great gossips, and can send a story like this flying through the county. He may do so yet."

At another time Hilda would have taken more interest in this narration, but now she seemed so preoccupied that her usual vigilance had left her. Gualtier noticed this, but was scarcely surprised. It was only a fresh proof of her infatuation.

So after a few moments of silent thoughtfulness he left the room.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A STRANGE ENCOUNTER.

On the day after Gualtier's interview with Hilda, Lord Chetwynde was still in London, occupied with the business which had brought him there. It was between ten and eleven in the morning, and he was walking down Piccadilly on his way to the City, where he had an appointment with his solicitors. He was very much preoccupied, and scarcely noticed any thing around him. Walking on in this mood he felt his arm seized by some one who had come up behind him, and a voice exclaimed:

"Windham! by all that's great! How are you, old fellow?" and before he had time to recover from his surprise, his hand was seized, appropriated, and nearly wrung off by Obed Chute.

To meet Obed Chute thus in London was certainly strange, yet not so very much so, after all. London is vast, multitudinous, enormous—a nation rather than a city, as De Quincey well remarks—a place where one may hide and never be discovered; yet after all there are certain streets where strangers are most frequent, and that two strangers should meet one another here in one of these few thoroughfares is more common than one would suppose. After the first surprise at such a sudden greeting Windham felt it to be a very natural thing for Obed Chute to be in London, and evinced as much pleasure at meeting him as was shown by the other.

"Have you been here ever since your return to England?" he asked.

"Oh no," said Windham, "I've only been here a short time, and I have to leave this afternoon."

"I'm sorry for that; I should like to see you—but I suppose it can't be helped; and then I must go back immediately."

"Ah! You are on your way to America, then?"

"America! Oh no. I mean—go back to Italy."

"Italy?"

"Yes; we're all there yet."

"I hope Miss Chute and your family are all well?" said Lord Chetwynde, politely.

"Never better," said Obed.

"Where are you staying now?"

"In Naples."

"It's a very pleasant place."

"Too pleasant to leave."

"By-the-way," said Lord Chetwynde, after a pause, and speaking with assumed indifference, "were you ever able to find out any thing about—Miss Lorton?"

His indifference was but poorly carried out. At the mention of that name he stammered, and then stopped short.

But Obed did not notice any peculiarity. He answered, quickly and earnestly;

"It's that very thing, Windham, that has brought me here. I've left her in Naples."

"What?" cried Lord Chetwynde, eagerly; "she is with you yet, then?"

"Yes."

"In Naples?"

"Yes—with my family. Poor little thing! Windham, I have a story to tell about her that will make your heart bleed, if you have the heart of a man."

"My God!" cried Lord Chetwynde, in deep emotion; "what is it? Has any thing new happened?"

"Yes, something new—something worse than before."

"But *she*—*she* is alive—is she not—she is well—she—"

"Thank God, yes," said Obed, not noticing the intense emotion of the other; "yes—she has suffered, poor little girl, but she is getting over it—and one day I hope she may find some kind of comfort. But at present, and for some time to come, I'm afraid that any thing like happiness or peace or comfort will be impossible for her."

"Is she very sad?" asked Lord Chetwynde, in a voice which was tremulous from suppressed agitation.

"The poor child bears up wonderfully, and struggles hard to make us think that she is cheerful; but any one who watches her can easily see that she has some deep-seated grief, which, in spite of all our care, may even yet wear away her young life. Windham, I've heard of cases of a broken heart. I think I once in my life saw a case of that kind, and I'm afraid that this case will—will come at last to be classed in that list."

Lord Chetwynde said nothing. He had nothing to say—he had nothing to do. His face in the few moments of this conversation had grown ghastly white, his eyes were fixed on vacancy, and an expression of intense pain spread over his features. He walked along by Obed Chute's side with the uncertain step of one who walks in a dream.

Obed said nothing for some time. His own thoughts were reverting to that young girl whom he had left in Naples buried under a mountain of woe. Could he ever draw her forth from that overwhelming grief which pressed her down?

They went on together through several streets without any particular intention, each one occupied with his own thoughts, until at last they found themselves at St. James's Park. Here they entered, and walked along one of the chief avenues.

"You remember, Windham," said Obed at last—"of course you have not forgotten the story which Miss Lorton told about her betrayal."

Lord Chetwynde bowed, without trusting himself to speak.

"And you remember the villain's name, too, of course."

"Yes—Gualtier," said Lord Chetwynde.

"I put the case in the hands of the Marseilles police, and you know that up to the time when we left nothing had been done. Nothing has been done since of any consequence. On my way here I stopped at Marseilles, and found that the police had been completely baffled, and had found no trace whatever either of Gualtier or of the maid Mathilde. When I arrived at Marseilles I found that the police there had been on the look-out for that man for seven weeks, but in spite of the most minute inquiry, and the most vigilant watchfulness, they had seen no sign of any such person. The conclusion that I have come to is that he never went to Naples—at least not after his crime. Nor, on the other hand, is it likely that he remained in France. The only thing that I can think of is that both he and the maid Mathilde went back to England."

"There is Germany," said Lord Chetwynde, who had not lost a word, "or the other states of Italy. Florence is a pleasant place to go to. Above all, there is America—the common land of refuge to all who have to fly from the Old World."

"Yes, all that is true—very true. It may be so; but I have an idea that the man may still be in England, and I have some hope of getting on his track now. But this is not the immediate purpose of my coming. That was caused by a discovery of new features in this dark case, which show a deliberate plan on the part of Gualtier and others to destroy Miss Lorton so as to get her money."

"Have you found out any thing else? Has any fresh calamity fallen upon that innocent head?" asked Lord Chetwynde, in breathless anxiety. "At any rate, it can not be so bad as what she has already suffered."

"In one sense it is not so bad, but in another sense it is worse."

"How?"

"Why, it is not so bad, for it only concerns the loss of money; but then, again, it is far worse, for"—and Obed's voice dropped low—"for it shows her that there is an accomplice of Gualtier's, who has joined with him in this crime, and been a principal in it, and this accomplice is—*her sister!*"

"Great God!" cried Lord Chetwynde, aghast. "Her sister?"

"Her sister," said Obed, who did not, as yet, think it necessary to tell what Zillah had revealed to him in confidence about their not being sisters.

Lord Chetwynde seemed overwhelmed.

Obed then began and detailed to him every circumstance of the affair of the draft, to all of which the other listened with rapt attention. A long discussion followed this revelation. Lord Chetwynde could not help seeing that Miss Lorton had been betrayed by her sister as well as by Gualtier, and felt painfully affected by the cold-blooded cruelty with which the abstraction of the money was managed. To him this "Ella Lorton" seemed wronged as no one had ever been wronged before, and his heart burned to assist Obed Chute in his work of vengeance.

He said as much. "But I fear," he added, "that there is not much chance. At any rate, it will be a work of years; and long before then, in fact, before many weeks, I expect to be on my way back to India. As to this wretched, this guilty pair, it is my opinion that they have fled to America. Hilda Lorton can not be old in crime, and her first instinct would be to fly from England. If you ever find those wretches, it will be there."

"I dare say you are right," said Obed. "But," he added, in tones of grim determination, "if it takes years to find this out, I am ready. I am willing to spend years in the search. The police of Italy and of France are already on the track of this affair. It is my intention to direct the London police to the same game, and on my way back I'll give notice at Berlin and Vienna, so as to set the Prussian and Austrian authorities to work. If all these combined can't do any thing, then I'll begin to think that these devils are not in Europe. If they are in America, I know a dozen New York detectives that can do something in the way of finding out even more artful scoundrels than these. For my own part, if, after ten years of incessant labor, any light is thrown on this, I shall be fully rewarded. I'd spend twice the time if I had it for her, the poor little thing!"

Obed spoke like a tender, pitying father, and his tones vibrated to the heart of Lord Chetwynde.

For a time he was the subject of a mighty struggle. The deepest feelings of his nature were all concerned here. Might he not now make this the object of his life—to give up every thing, and search out these infernal criminals, and avenge that fair girl whose image had been fixed so deeply on his heart? But, then, he feared this task. Already she had chained him to Marseilles, and still he looked back with anguish upon the horror of that last parting with her. All his nature yearned and longed to feel once more the sunshine of her presence; but, on account of the very intensity of that longing, the dictates of honor and duty bade him resist the impulse. The very tenderness of his love—its all-consuming ardor—those very things which impelled him to espouse her cause and fight her battles and win her gratitude, at the very same time held him back and bade him avoid her, and tear her image from his heart. For who was he, and what was he, that he should yield to this overmastering spell which had been thrown over him by the witchery of this young girl? *Had he not his wife?* Was she not at Chetwynde Castle? That odious wife, forced on him in his boyhood, long since grown abhorrent, and now standing up, an impassable barrier between him and the dearest longings of his heart. So he crushed down desire; and, while assenting to Obed's plans, made

no proposal to assist him in any way in their accomplishment.

At the end of about two hours Obed announced his intentions at present. He had come first and more especially to see Messrs. Tilton and Browne, with a hope that he might be able to trace the affair back far enough to reach Hilda Lorton; and secondly, to set the London police to work.

"Will you make any stay?" asked Lord Chetwynde.

"No, not more than I can help. I can find out soon whether my designs are practicable or not. If they can not be immediately followed out, I will leave it to the police, who can do far better than me, and go back to Naples. Miss Lorton is better there, and I feel like traveling about Italy till she has recovered. I see that the country is better for her than all the doctors and medicines in the world. A sail round Naples Bay may rouse her from the deepest melancholy. She has set her heart on visitng Rome and Florence. So I must go back to my little girl, you see."

"Those names," said Lord Chetwynde, calmly, and without exhibiting any signs of the emotion which the allusion to that "little girl" caused in his heart—"those names ought certainly to be traceable—'Hilda Lorton,' 'Ella Lorton.' The names are neither vulgar nor common. A properly organized effort ought to result in some discovery. 'Hilda Lorton,' 'Ella Lorton,'" he repeated, "'Hilda,' 'Ella'—not very common names—'Hilda,' 'Ella.'"

He repeated these names thus over and over, but the names gave no hint to the speaker of the dark, deep mystery which lay beneath.

As for Obed, he knew that Hilda was not *Hilda Lorton*, and that a search after any one by that name would be useless. Zillah had told him that she was not her sister. At length the two friends separated, Lord Chetwynde saying that he would remain in London till the following day, and call on Obed at his hotel that evening to learn the result of his labors. With this each went about his own business; but into the mind of Lord Chetwynde there came a fresh anxiety, which made him have vague desires of flying away forever—off to India, to Australia—any where from the power of his overmastering, his hopeless love. And amidst all this there came a deep longing to go to Italy—to Naples, to give up every thing—to go back with Obed Chute. It needed all the strength of his nature to resist this impulse, and even when it was overcome it was only for a time. His business that day was neglected, and he waited impatiently for the evening.

Evening came at last, and Lord Chetwynde went to Obed's hotel. He found his friend there, looking somewhat dejected.

"I suppose you have accomplished nothing," he said. "I see it in your face."

"You're about right," said Obed. "I'm going back to Naples to-morrow."

"You've failed utterly, then?"

"Yes, in all that I hoped. But still I have done what I could to put things on the right track."

"What have you done?"

"Well, I went first to Tilton and Browne. One of my own London agents accompanied me there, and introduced me. They were at once very eager to do all that they could for me. But I soon found out that nothing could be done. That girl—Windham—that girl," repeated Obed, with solemn emphasis, "is a little the deepest party that it's ever been my lot to come across. How any one brought up with my little girl" (this was the name that Obed loved to give to Zillah) "could develop such superhuman villainy, and such cool, calculating, far-reaching craft, is more than I can understand. She knocks me, I confess. But, then, the plan may all be the work of Gualtier."

"Why, what new thing have you found out?"

"Oh, nothing exactly new; only this, that the deposit of Miss Lorton's funds and the withdrawal, which were all done by her in Miss Lorton's name and person, were managed so cleverly that there is not the slightest ghost of a clew by which either she or the money can be traced. She drew the funds from one banker and deposited them with another. I thought I should be able to find out the banker from whom they were drawn, but it is impossible. Before I came here I had written to Tilton and Browne, and they had made inquiries from all the London bankers, but not one of them had any acquaintance whatever with that name. It must have been some provincial bank, but which one can not be known. The funds which she deposited were in Bank of England notes, and these, as well as the consols, gave no indication of their last place of deposit. It was cleverly managed, and I think the actors in this affair understand too well their business to leave a single mark on their trail. The account had only been with Tilton and Browne for a short time, and they could not give me the slightest assistance. And so I failed there completely.

"I then went to the police, and stated my case. The prefect at Marseilles had already been in communication with them about it. They had made inquiries at all the schools and seminaries, had searched the directories, and every thing else of that kind, but could find no music-teacher mentioned by the name of Gualtier. They took it for granted that the name was an assumed one. They had also investigated the name 'Lorton,' and had found one or two old county families; but these knew nothing of the young ladies in question. They promised to continue their search, and communicate to me any thing that might be discovered. There the matter rests now, and there I suppose it must rest until something is done by somebody. When I have started the Austrian and Prussian police on the same scent I will feel that nothing more can be done in Europe. I suppose it is no use to go to Spain or Russia or Turkey. By-the-way, there is Belgium. I mustn't forget that."

It was only by the strongest effort that Lord Chetwynde was able to conceal the intensity of his interest in Obed's revelations. All that day his own business had been utterly forgotten, and all his thoughts had been occupied with Zillah and her mysterious sorrows. When he left Marseilles he had sought to throw away all concern for her affairs, and devote himself to the Chetwynde business. But Obed's appearance had brought back before him in fresh strength

all his memories of Zillah, and the darker color which her tragedy assumed excited the deepest feelings of his nature. He struggled against this in vain, and his future plans took a coloring from this, which afterward resulted in very important events.

The two friends talked over this matter, in which both were so deeply interested, far into the hours of the morning, and at length they bade each other good-by. On the following day Obed was to go to Naples, and Lord Chetwynde back to the Castle.

CHAPTER XLV.

ANOTHER EFFORT.

THE words of Hilda produced a deeper effect upon Gualtier than she could have imagined. Accustomed to rule him and to have her words received and her commands obeyed without remonstrance, she had grown to think that those words of hers were all-sufficient by themselves, and needed no explanation. She did not make allowance for the feelings, the thoughts, and, above all, for the passions of one like Gualtier. She was taken up with her own plans, her cares, her desires, and her purposes. He, on his part, was absorbed in one desire, and all that desire was centered upon the one who held herself so grandly aloof from him, using him as her tool, but never deigning to grant him any thing more than some slight word or act of kindness. Her last words had sunk deep into his soul. They revealed to him the true condition of things. He learned now, for the first time, that she loved Lord Chetwynde, and was anxious to gain his love in return. Lord Chetwynde, he saw, was not an obstacle to be removed from her path, but rather an object of yearning desire, which was to be won for herself. He saw that she wished to be in reality that which she was now only in name, and that falsely—namely, Lady Chetwynde. To a mind like his such a discovery was bitter indeed. All the vengeful feelings that lay dormant within him were aroused, and henceforth all the hate which he was capable of feeling was turned toward this man, who had so easily gained for himself that love for which he had labored so long, so arduously, and yet so vainly. Had he not devoted years to the task of acquiring that love? Had he not labored with patience and unfaltering devotion? Had he not endured slights and insults without number? Had he not crossed the ocean in her service in search of information which she wished to gain? And for all this what reward had he received? Nothing more than a cold smile. But here came this man who was at once a stranger and an enemy—a man who abhorred her, a man whom she ought to hate, on whom she had wrought fearful injuries; and lo, instead of hating, she loved him in a moment! Bitter indeed were the thoughts of Gualtier as these things came to his mind. Scorn for himself, or slights, or indifference, he might have borne in patient waiting; but when the one who showed this indifference and this scorn proved eager to sacrifice him, herself, and every thing else to the man whom she ought to hate, then his position became intolerable—unendurable. The dislike which he had felt toward Lord Chetwynde soon grew to bitter hate, and the hate rapidly became so strong that nothing but implacable vengeance would appease it.

Two or three days after Gualtier's arrival Lord Chetwynde returned. His return was quiet and undemonstrative. The servants greeted their master with the usual respectful welcome, but he took no notice of them. He went to the library, to which his portmanteau was carried, and after remaining there a few moments he went to Mrs. Hart's room. The housekeeper was there.

"How has she been?" he asked.

"Very much better."

"Is she conscious?"

"Not yet, altogether, but she is beginning to be."

"What does the doctor say?"

"He has great hopes, he says; and he tells me that unremitting care may yet bring her around. He seems to be very hopeful."

"You have attended her, I hope, as I directed."

"Yes, my lord. I have devoted most of my time to her. I have neglected the house for her sake. I told Lady Chetwynde that Mrs. Hart depended upon me, and that I would nurse her."

"That was not necessary. She might be displeased if the house were neglected."

"Oh no, my lord. She showed the strongest interest in Mrs. Hart, and I have to bring her reports of the doctor's opinions every day."

"Ah! well. I am glad that you have been so attentive. You must continue to do so. Devote yourself chiefly to her. It is my will. If you get into any trouble while I am away, let me know, will you? I have given you my address, and any letter from you will reach me there."

"Yes, my lord."

Lord Chetwynde then returned to the library, and to his business.

Yes. It was true that Mrs. Hart was recovering. She had come out of that deep stupor in which she had lain so long. The assiduous attentions which she had received were chiefly the cause of this. Hilda had heard of this, and was greatly troubled. In Mrs. Hart's recovery she saw one great danger, yet it was a danger which she felt herself powerless to avert. The housekeeper had been engaged now in this new duty directly by Lord Chetwynde, and in her present position she did not dare to remonstrate. She thought that Lord Chetwynde either understood her, or at least suspected her; and believed that any act of hers which might lead to the delay of Mrs. Hart's recovery would be punished by him with implacable vengeance. In this delicate position, therefore, she found that the only possible course open to her was to wait patiently on her opportunities. If the worst came to the worst, and Mrs. Hart recovered, her only resource would be to leave Chetwynde for a time at least. For such a step she had prepared herself, and for it she had every excuse. Lord Chetwynde, at least, could neither blame her nor suspect her if she did so. She could retire quietly to Pomeroy Court, and there await the issue of events. Such a step in itself was not unpleasant, and she would have carried it into execution long ago had it not been for the power which Lord Chetwynde exerted over her. It was this, and this only, which forced her to stay.

Gualtier also was not unmindful of this. On the day of his arrival he had learned that Mrs. Hart was recovering and might soon be well. He understood perfectly all that was involved in her recovery, and the danger that might attend upon it. For Mrs. Hart would at once recognize Hilda, and ask after Zillah. There was now no chance to do any thing. Lord Chetwynde watched over her as a son might watch over a mother. These two thus stood before him as a standing menace, an ever-threatening danger in that path from which other dangers had been removed at such a hazard and at such a cost. What could he do? Nothing. It was for Hilda to act in this emergency. He himself was powerless. He feared also that Hilda herself did not realize the full extent of her danger. He saw how abstracted she had become, and how she was engrossed by this new and unlooked-for feeling which had taken full possession of her heart. One thing alone was possible to him, and that was to warn Hilda. Perhaps she knew the danger, and was indifferent to it; perhaps she was not at all aware of it; in any case, a timely warning could not possibly do any harm, and might do a great deal of good. Under these circumstances he wrote a few words, which he contrived to place in her hands on the morning when Lord Chetwynde arrived. The words were these:

"*Mrs. Hart is recovering, and the doctor hopes that she will soon be entirely well.*"

Hilda read these words gloomily, but nothing could be done except what she had already decided to do. She burned the note, and returned to her usual meditations. The arrival of Lord Chetwynde soon drove every thing else out of her mind, and she waited eagerly for the time for dinner, when she might see him, hear his voice, and feast her eyes upon his face.

On descending into the dining-room she found Lord Chetwynde already there. Without a thought of former slights, but following only the instincts of her own heart, which in its ardent passion was now filled with joy at the sight of him, she advanced toward him with extended hand. She did not say a word. She could not speak. Her emotion overpowered her. She could only extend her hand and look up into his face imploringly.

Lord Chetwynde stood before her, cold, reserved, with a lofty hauteur on his brow, and a coldness in his face which might have repelled any one less impassioned. But Hilda was desperate. She had resolved to make this last trial, and stake every thing upon this. Regardless, therefore, of the repellent expression of his face, and the coldness which was manifested in every lineament, she determined to force a greeting from him. It was with this resolve that she held out her hand and advanced toward him.

But Lord Chetwynde stood unmoved. His hands hung down. He looked at her calmly, yet coldly, without anger, yet without feeling of any kind. As she approached he bowed.

"You will not even shake hands with me?" faltered Hilda, in a stammering voice.

"Of what avail would that be?" said Lord Chetwynde. "You and I are forever separate. We must stand apart forever. Why pretend to a friendship which does not exist? I am not your friend, Lady Chetwynde."

Hilda was silent. Her hand fell by her side. She shrank back into herself. Her disappointment deepened into sadness unutterable, a sadness that was too profound for anger, a sadness beyond words. So the dinner passed on. Lord Chetwynde was calm, stern, fixed in his feelings and in his purpose. Hilda was despairing, and voiceless in that despair. For the first time she began to feel that all was lost.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE TABLES TURNED.

LORD CHETWYNDE had the satisfaction of seeing that Mrs. Hart recovered steadily. Day after day she improved, and at length became conscious of surrounding objects. After having gained consciousness her recovery became more rapid, and she was at length strong enough for him to visit her. The housekeeper prepared her for the visit, so that the shock might not be too great. To her surprise she found that the idea of his presence in the same house had a better effect on her than all the medicines which she had taken, and all the care which she had received. She said not a word, but lay quiet with a smile upon her face, as one who is awaiting the arrival of some sure and certain bliss. It was this expression which was on her face when Lord Chetwynde entered. She lay back with her face turned toward the door, and with all that wistful yet happy expectancy which has been mentioned. He walked up to her, took her thin, emaciated hands in his, and kissed her pale forehead.

"My own dear old nurse," he said, "how glad I am to find you so much better!"

Tears came to Mrs. Hart's eyes. "My boy!" she cried—"my dearest boy, the sight of you gives me life!" Sobs choked her utterance. She lay there clasping his hand in both of hers, and wept.

Mrs. Hart had already learned from the housekeeper that she had been ill for many months, and her own memory, as it gradually rallied from the shock and collected its scattered energies, brought back before her the cause of her illness. Had her recovery taken place at any other time, her grief might have caused a relapse; but now she learned that Lord Chetwynde was here watching over her—"her boy," "her darling," "her Guy"—and this was enough to counterbalance the grief which she might have felt. So now she lay holding his hand in hers, gazing up into his face with an expression of blissful contentment and of perfect peace; feeding all her soul in that gaze, drawing from him new strength at every glance, and murmuring words of fondest love and endearment. As he sat there the sternness of Lord Chetwynde's features relaxed, the eyes softened into love and pity, the hard lines about the mouth died away. He seemed to feel himself a boy again, as he once more held that hand which had guided his boyhood's years.

He staid there for hours. Mrs. Hart would not let him go, and he did not care to do violence to her affections by tearing himself away. She seemed to cling to him as though he were the only living being on whom her affections were fixed. He took to himself all the love of

this poor, weak, fond creature, and felt a strange pleasure in it. She on her part seemed to acquire new strength from his presence.

"I'm afraid, my dear nurse," said he, "that I am fatiguing you. I will leave you now and come back again."

"No, no," said Mrs. Hart, earnestly; "do not leave me. You will leave me soon enough. Do not desert me now, my own boy—my sweet child—stay by me."

"But all this fatigues you."

"No, my dearest—it gives me new strength—such strength as I have not known for a long time. If you leave me I shall sink back again into weakness. Do not forsake me."

So Lord Chetwynde staid, and Mrs. Hart made him tell her all about what he had been doing during the years of his absence. Hours passed away in this conversation. And he saw, and wondered as he saw it, that Mrs. Hart grew stronger every moment. It seemed as if his presence brought to her life and joy and strength. He laughingly mentioned this.

"Yes, my dearest," said Mrs. Hart, "you are right. You bring me new life. You come to me like some strong angel, and bid me live. I dare say I have something to live for, though what it is I can not tell. Since *he* has gone I do not see what there is for me to do, or why it should be that I should linger on in life, unless it may be for you."

"For me—yes, my dear nurse," said Lord Chetwynde, fondly kissing her pale brow—"yes, it must be for me. Live, then, for me."

"You have others who love you and live for you," said Mrs. Hart, mournfully. "You don't need your poor old nurse now."

Lord Chetwynde shook his head.

"No others can supply your place," said he. "You will always be my own dear old nurse."

Mrs. Hart looked up with a smile of ecstasy.

"I am going away," said Lord Chetwynde, after some further conversation, "in a few days, and I do not know when I will be back, but I want you, for my sake, to try and be cheerful, so as to get well as soon as possible."

"Going away!" gasped Mrs. Hart, in strong surprise. "Where to?"

"To Italy. To Florence," said Lord Chetwynde.

"To Florence?"

"Yes."

"Why do you leave Chetwynde?"

"I have some business," said he, "of a most important kind; so important that I must leave every thing and go away."

"Is your wife going with you?"

"No—she will remain here," said Lord Chetwynde, dryly.

Mrs. Hart could not help noticing the very peculiar tone in which he spoke of his wife.

"She will be lonely without you," said she.

"Well—business must be attended to, and this is of vital importance," was Lord Chetwynde's answer.

Mrs. Hart was silent for a long time.

"Do you expect ever to come back?" she asked at last.

"I hope so."

"But you do not know so?"

"I should be sorry to give up Chetwynde forever," said he.

"Is there any danger of that?"

"Yes. I am thinking of it. The affairs of the estate are of such a nature that I may be compelled to sacrifice even Chetwynde. You know that for three generations this prospect has been before us."

"But I thought that danger was averted by your marriage?" said Mrs. Hart, in a low voice.

"It was averted for my father's lifetime, but now it remains for me to do justice to those who were wronged by that arrangement; and justice shall be done, even if Chetwynde has to be sacrificed."

"I understand," said Mrs. Hart, in a quiet, thoughtful tone—"and you are going to Florence?"

"Yes, in a few days. But you will be left in the care of those who love you."

"Lady Chetwynde used to love me," said Mrs. Hart; "and I loved her."

"I am glad to know that—more so than I can say."

"She was always tender and loving and true. Your father loved her like a daughter."

"So I have understood."

"You speak coldly."

"Do I? I was not aware of it. No doubt her care will be as much at your service as ever, and when I come back again I shall find you in a green old age—won't I? Say I shall, my dear old nurse."

Tears stood in Mrs. Hart's eyes. She gazed wistfully at him, but said nothing.

A few more interviews took place between these two, and in a short time Lord Chetwynde bade her an affectionate farewell, and left the place once more.

On the morning after his departure Hilda was in the morning-room waiting for Gualtier, whom she had summoned. Although she knew that Lord Chetwynde was going away, yet his departure seemed sudden, and took her by surprise. He went away without any notice, just as he had done before, but somehow she had expected some formal announcement of his intention, and, because he had gone away without a word, she began to feel aggrieved and injured. Out of this there grew before her the memory of all Lord Chetwynde's coolness toward her, of the slights and insults to which he had subjected her, of the abhorrence which he had manifested toward her. She felt that she was despised. It was as though she had been foully wronged. To all these this last act was added. He had gone away without a word or a sign—where, she knew not—why, she could not tell. It was his abhorrence for her that had driven him away—this was evident.

"Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." And this woman, who found herself doubly and trebly scorned, lashed herself into a fury of indignation. In this new-found fury she found the first relief which she had known from the torments of unrequited passion, from the longing and the craving and the yearning of her hot and fervid nature. Into this new fit of indignation she flung herself with complete abandonment. Since he scorned her, he should suffer—this was her feeling. Since he refused her love, he should feel her vengeance. He should know

that she might be hated, but she was not one who could be despised. For every slight which he had heaped upon her he should pay with his heart's blood. Under the pangs of this new disappointment she writhed and groaned in her anguish, and all the tumults of feeling which she had endured ever since she saw him now seemed to congregate and gather themselves up into one outburst of furious and implacable vengefulness. Her heart beat hot and fast in her fierce excitement. Her face was pale, but the hectic flush on either cheek told of the fires within; and the nervous agitation of her manner, her clenched hands, and heaving breast, showed that the last remnant of self-control was forgotten and swept away in this furious rush of passion. It was in such a mood as this that Gualtier found her as he entered the morning-room to which she had summoned him.

Hilda at first did not seem to see him, or at any rate did not notice him. She was sitting as before in a deep arm-chair, in the depths of which her slender figure seemed lost. Her hands were clutched together. Her face was turned toward that portrait over the fire-place, which represented Lord Chetwynde in his early youth. Upon that face, usually so like a mask, so impassive, and so unapt to express the feelings that existed within, there was now visibly expressed an array of contending emotions. She had thrown away or lost her self-restraint; those feelings raged and expressed themselves uncontrolled, and Gualtier for the first time saw her off her guard. He entered with his usual stealthy tread, and watched her for some time as she sat looking at the picture. He read in her face the emotions which were expressed there. He saw disappointment, rage, fury, love, vengeance, pride, and desire all contending together. He learned for the first time that this woman whom he had believed to be cold as an icicle was as hot-hearted as a volcano; that she was fervid, impulsive, vehement, passionate, intense in love and in hate. As he learned this he felt his soul sink within him as he thought that it was not reserved for him, but for another, to call forth all the fiery vehemence of that stormy nature.

She saw him at last, as with a passionate gesture she tore her eyes away from the portrait, which seemed to fascinate her. The sight of Gualtier at once restored her outward calm. She was herself once more. She waved her hand loftily to a seat, and the very fact that she had made this exhibition of feeling before him seemed to harden that proud manner which she usually displayed toward him.

"I have sent for you," said she, in calm, measured tones, "for an important purpose. You remember the last journey on which I sent you?"

"Yes, my lady."

"You did that well. I have another one on which I wish you to go. It refers to the same person."

"Lord Chetwynde?"

Hilda bowed.

"I am ready," said Gualtier.

"He left this morning, and I don't know where he has gone, but I wish you to go after him."

"I know where he intended to go."

"How? Where?"

"Some of the servants overheard him speaking to Mrs. Hart about going to Italy."

"Italy!"

"Yes. I can come up with him somewhere, if you wish it, and get on his track. But what is it that you wish me to do?"

"In the first place, to follow him up."

"How—at a distance—or near him? That is to say, shall I travel in disguise, or shall I get employ near his person? I can be a valet, or a courier, or any thing else."

"Any thing. This must be left to you. I care not for details. The grand result is what I look to."

"And what is the grand result?"

"Something which you yourself once proposed," said Hilda, in low, stern tones, and with deep meaning.

Gualtier's face flushed. He understood her.

"I know," said he. "He is an obstacle, and you wish this obstacle removed."

"Yes."

"You understand me exactly, my lady, do you?" asked Gualtier, earnestly. "You wish it removed—*just as other obstacles have been removed.* You wish never to see him again. You wish to be your own mistress henceforth—and always."

"You have stated exactly what I mean," said Hilda, in icy tones.

Gualtier was silent for some time.

"Lady Chetwynde," said he at length, in a tone which was strikingly different from that with which for years he had addressed her—"Lady Chetwynde, I wish you to observe that this task upon which you now send me is far different from any of the former ones which I have undertaken at your bidding. I have always set out without a word—like one of those Haschishim of whom you have read, when he received the mandate of the Sheik of the mountains. But the nature of this errand is such that I may never see you again. The task is a perilous one. The man against whom I am sent is a man of singular acuteness, profound judgment, dauntless courage, and remorseless in his vengeance. His acuteness may possibly enable him to see through me, and frustrate my plan before it is fairly begun. What then? For me, at least, there will be nothing but destruction. It is, therefore, as if I now were standing face to face with death, and so I crave the liberty of saying something to you this time, and not departing in silence."

Gualtier spoke with earnestness, with dignity, yet with perfect respect. There was that in his tone and manner which gave indications of a far higher nature than any for which Hilda had ever yet given him credit. His words struck her strangely. They were not insubordinate, for he announced his intention to obey her; they were not disrespectful, for his manner was full of his old reverence; but they seemed like an assertion of something like manhood, and like a blow against that undisputed ascendency which she had so long maintained over him. In spite of her preoccupation, and her tempestuous passion, she was forced to listen, and she listened with a vague surprise, looking at him with a cold stare.

"You seem to me," said she, "to speak as though you were unwilling to go—or afraid."

"Pardon me, Lady Chetwynde," said Gual-

tier, "you can not think that. I have said that I would go, but that, as I may never see you again, I wish to say something. I wish, in fact, now, after all these years, to have a final understanding with you."

"Well?" said Hilda.

"I need not remind you of the past," said Gualtier, "or of my blind obedience to all your mandates. Two events at least stand out conspicuously. I have assisted you to the best of my power. Why I did so must be evident to you. You know very well that it was no sordid motive on my part, no hate toward others, no desire for vengeance, but something far different —something which has animated me for years, so that it was enough that you gave a command for me to obey. For years I have been thus at your call like a slave, and now, after all these years—now, that I depart on my last and most perilous mission, and am speaking to you words which may possibly be the last that you will ever hear from me—I wish to implore you, to beseech you, to promise me that reward which you must know I have always looked forward to, and which can be the only possible recompense to one like me for services like mine."

He stopped and looked imploringly at her.

"And what is that?" asked Hilda, mechanically, as though she did not fully understand him.

"*Yourself*," said Gualtier, in a low, earnest voice, with all his soul in the glance which he threw upon her.

The moment that he said the word Hilda started back with a gesture of impatience and contempt, and regarded him with an expression of anger and indignation, and with a frown so black that it seemed as if she would have blasted him with her look had she been able. Gualtier, however, did not shrink from her fierce glance. His eyes were no longer lowered before hers. He regarded her fixedly, calmly, yet respectfully, with his head erect, and no trace of his old unreasoning submission in his face and manner. Surprised as Hilda had evidently been at his words, she seemed no less surprised at his changed demeanor. It was the first time in her life that she had seen in him any revelation of manhood; and that view opened up to her very unpleasant possibilities.

"This is not a time," she said at length, in a sharp voice, "for such nonsense as this."

"I beg your pardon, Lady Chetwynde," said Gualtier, firmly, "I think that this and no other is the time. Whether it be 'nonsense' or not need not be debated. It is any thing but nonsense to me. All my past life seems to sweep up to this moment, and now is the crisis of my fate. All my future depends upon it, whether for weal or woe. Lady Chetwynde, do not call it nonsense—do not underrate its importance. Do not, I implore you, underrate me. Thus far you have tacitly assumed that I am a feeble and almost imbecile character. It is true that my abject devotion to you has forced me to give a blind obedience to all your wishes. But mark this well, Lady Chetwynde, such obedience itself involved some of the highest qualities of manhood. Something like courage and fortitude and daring was necessary to carry out those plans of yours which I so willingly undertook. I do not wish to speak of myself, however. I only wish to show you that I am in earnest, and that though you may treat this occasion with levity, I can not. All my life, Lady Chetwynde, hangs on your answer to my question."

Gualtier's manner was most vehement, and indicative of the strongest emotion, but the tones of his voice were low and only audible to Hilda. Low as the voice was, however, it still none the less exhibited the intensity of the passion that was in his soul.

Hilda, on the contrary, evinced a stronger rage at every word which he uttered. The baleful light of her dark eyes grew more fiery in its concentrated anger and scorn.

"It seems to me," said she, in her most contemptuous tone, "that you engage to do my will only on certain conditions; and that you are taking advantage of my necessities in order to drive a bargain."

"You are right, Lady Chetwynde," said Gualtier, calmly. "I am trying to drive a bargain; but remember it is not for money—it is for *yourself*."

"And I," said Hilda, with unchanged scorn, "will never submit to such coercion. When you dare to dictate to me, you mistake my character utterly. What I have to give I will give freely. My gifts shall never be extorted from me, even though my life should depend upon my compliance or refusal. The tone which you have chosen to adopt toward me is scarcely one that will make me swerve from my purpose, or alter any decision which I may have made. You have deceived yourself. You seem to suppose that you are indispensable to me, and that this is the time when you can force upon me any conditions you choose. As far as that is concerned, let me tell you plainly that you may do what you choose, and either go on this errand or stay. In any case, by no possibility, will I make any promise whatever."

This Hilda said quickly, and in her usual scorn. She thought that such indifference might bring Gualtier to terms, and make him decide to obey her without extorting this promise. For a moment she thought that she had succeeded. At her words a change came over Gualtier's face. He looked humbled and sad. As she ceased, he turned his eyes imploringly to her, and said:

"Lady Chetwynde, do not say that. I entreat you to give me this promise."

"I will not!" said Hilda, sharply.

"Once more I entreat you," said Gualtier, more earnestly.

"Once more I refuse," said Hilda. "Go and do this thing first, and then come and ask me."

"Will you *then* promise me?"

"I will tell you nothing now."

"Lady Chetwynde, for the last time I *implore* you to give me some ground for hope at least. Tell me—if this thing be accomplished, will you give me what I want?"

"I will make no engagement whatever," said Hilda, coldly.

Gualtier at this seemed to raise himself at once above his dejection, his humility, and his prayerful attitude, to a new and stronger assertion of himself.

"Very well," said he, gravely and sternly. "Now listen to *me*, Lady Chetwynde. I will no longer entreat—I *insist* that you give me this promise."

"Insist!"

Nothing can describe the scorn and contempt of Hilda's tone as she uttered this word.

"I repeat it," said Gualtier, calmly, and with deeper emphasis. "*I insist* that you give me your promise."

"My friend," said Hilda, contemptuously, "you do not seem to understand our positions. This seems to me like impertinence, and, unless you make an apology, I shall be under the very unpleasant necessity of obtaining a new steward."

As Hilda said this she turned paler than ever with suppressed rage.

Gualtier smiled scornfully.

"It seems to me," said he, "that you are the one who does not, or will not, understand our respective positions. You will *not* dismiss *me* from the stewardship, Lady Chetwynde, for you will be too sensible for that. You will retain me in that dignified office, for you know that I am indispensable to you, though you seemed to deny it a moment since. You have not forgotten the relations which we bear to one another. There are certain memories which rise between us two which will never escape the recollection of either of us till the latest moment of our lives; some of these are associated with the General, some with the Earl, and some—with *Zillah!*"

He stopped, as though the mention of that last name had overpowered him. As for Hilda, the pallor of her face grew deeper, and she trembled with mingled agitation and rage.

"Go!" said she. "Go! and let me never see your face again!"

"No," said Gualtier, "I will not go till I choose. As to seeing my face again, the wish is easier said than gained. No, Lady Chetwynde. *You are in my power!* You know it. I tell it to you here, and nothing can save you from me if I turn against you. You have never understood me, for you have never taken the trouble to do so. You have shown but little mercy toward me. When I have come home from serving you—*you know how*—hungering and thirsting for some slight act of appreciation, some token of thankfulness, you have always repelled me, and denied what I dared not request. Had you but given me the kind attention which a master gives to a dog, I would have followed you like a dog to the world's end, and died for you—like a dog, too," he added, in an under-tone. "But you have used me as a stepping-stone; thinking that, like such, I could be spurned aside when you were done with me. You have not thought that I am not a stone or a block, but a man, with a man's heart within me. And it is now as a man that I speak to you, because you force me to it. I tell you this, that you are in my power, and you must be mine!"

"Are you a madman?" cried Hilda, overwhelmed with amazement at this outburst. "Have you lost your senses? Fool! If you mean what you say, I defy you! Go, and use your power! *I* in the power of such as you?—Never!"

Her brows contracted as she spoke, and from beneath her black eyes seemed to shoot baleful fires of hate and rage unutterable. The full intensity of her nature was aroused, and the expression of her face was terrible in its fury and malignancy. But Gualtier did not recoil. On the contrary, he feasted his eyes on her, and a smile came to his features.

"You are beautiful!" said he. "You have a demon beauty that is overpowering. Oh, beautiful fiend! You can not resist. You must be mine—and you shall! I never saw you so lovely. I love you best in your fits of rage."

"Fool!" cried Hilda. "This is enough. You are mad, or else drunk; in either case you shall not stay another day in Chetwynde Castle. Go! or I will order the servants to put you out."

"There will be no occasion for that," said Gualtier, coolly. "I am going to leave you this very night to join Lord Chetwynde."

"It is too late now; your valuable services are no longer needed," said Hilda, with a sneer. "You may spare yourself the trouble of such a journey. Let me know what is due you, and I will pay it."

"You will pay me only one thing, and that is *yourself*," said Gualtier. "If you do not choose to pay *that* price you must take the consequences. I am going to join Lord Chetwynde, whether you wish me to or not. But, remember this!"—and Gualtier's voice grew menacing in its intonations—"remember this; it depends upon you in what capacity I am to join him. You are the one who must say whether I shall go to him as his enemy or his friend. If I go as his enemy, you know what will happen; if I go as his friend, it is you who must fall. Now, Lady Chetwynde, do you understand me?"

As Gualtier said this there was a deep meaning in his words which Hilda could not fail to understand, and there was at the same time such firmness and solemn decision that she felt that he would certainly do as he said. She saw at once the peril that lay before her. An alternative was offered: the one was, to come to terms with him; the other, to accept utter and hopeless ruin. That ruin, too, which he menaced was no common one. It was one which placed her under the grasp of the law, and from which no foreign land could shelter her. All her prospects, her plans, her hopes, were in that instant dashed away from before her; and she realized now, to the fullest extent, the frightful truth that she was indeed completely in the power of this man. The discovery of this acted on her like a shock, which sobered her and drove away her passion.

She said nothing in reply, but sat down in silence, and remained a long time without speaking. Gualtier, on his part, saw the effect of his last words, but he made no effort to interrupt her thoughts. He could not yet tell what she in her desperation might decide; he could only wait for her answer. He stood waiting patiently.

At last Hilda spoke:

"You've told me bitter truths—but they are truths. Unfortunately, I am in your power. If you choose to coerce me I must yield, for I am not yet ready to accept ruin."

"You promise then?"

"Since I must—I do."

"Thank you," said Gualtier; "and now you will not see me again till all is over either with *him* or with *me*."

He bowed respectfully and departed. After he had left, Hilda sat looking at the door with a face of rage and malignant fury. At length, starting to her feet, she hurried up to her room.

CHAPTER XLVII.

HILDA SEES A GULF BENEATH HER FEET.

The astonishing change in Gualtier was an overwhelming shock to Hilda. She had committed the fatal mistake of underrating him, and of putting herself completely in his power. She had counted on his being always humble and docile, always subservient and blindly obedient. She had put from her all thoughts of a possible day of reckoning. She had fostered his devotion to her so as to be used for her own ends, and now found that she had raised up a power which might sweep her away. In the first assertion of that power she had been vanquished, and compelled to make a promise which she had at first refused with the haughtiest contempt. She could only take refuge in vague plans of evading her promise, and in punishing Gualtier for what seemed to her his unparalleled audacity.

Yet, after all, bitter as the humiliation had been, it did not lessen her fervid passion for Lord Chetwynde, and the hate and the vengeance that had arisen when that passion had been contemned. After the first shock of the affair with Gualtier had passed, her madness and fury against him passed also, and her wild spirit was once again filled with the all-engrossing thought of Lord Chetwynde. Gualtier had gone off, as he said, and she was to see him no more for some time—perhaps never. He had his own plans and purposes, of the details of which Hilda knew nothing, but could only conjecture. She felt that failure on his part was not probable, and gradually, so confident was she that he would succeed, Lord Chetwynde began to seem to her not merely a doomed man, but a man who had already undergone his doom. And now another change came over her—that change which Death can make in the heart of the most implacable of men, when his enemy has left life forever. From the pangs of wounded love she had sought refuge in vengeance—but the prospect of a gratified vengeance was but a poor compensation for the loss of the hope of a requited love. The tenderness of love still remained, and it struggled with the ferocity of vengeance. That love pleaded powerfully for Lord Chetwynde's life. Hope came also, to lend its assistance to the arguments of love. Would it not be better to wait—even for years—and then perhaps the fierceness of Lord Chetwynde's repugnance might be allayed? Why destroy him, and her hope, and her love, forever, and so hastily? After such thoughts as these, however, the remembrance of Lord Chetwynde's contempt was sure to return and intensify her vengeance.

Under such circumstances, when distracted by so many cares, it is not surprising that she forgot all about Mrs. Hart. She had understood the full meaning of Gualtier's warning about her prospective recovery, but the danger passed from her mind. Gualtier had gone on his errand, and she was sure he would not falter. Shut up in her own chamber, she awaited in deep agitation the first tidings which he might send. Day succeeded to day; no tidings came; and at last she began to hope that he had failed—and the pleasantest sight which she could have seen at that time would have been Gualtier returning disappointed and baffled.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Hart, left to herself, steadily and rapidly recovered. Ever since her first recognition of Lord Chetwynde her improvement had been marked. New ideas seemed to have come to her; new motives for life; and with these the desire of life; and at the promptings of that desire health came back. This poor creature, even in the best days of her life at Chetwynde Castle, had not known any health beyond that of a moderate kind; and so a moderate recovery would suffice to give her what strength she had lost. To be able to wander about the house once more was all that she needed, and this was not long denied her.

In a few days after Gualtier's departure she was able to go about. She walked through the old familiar scenes, traversed the well-known halls, and surveyed the well-remembered apartments. One journey was enough for the first day. The next day she went about the grounds, and visited the chapel, where she sat for hours on the Earl's tomb, engaged in an absorbing meditation. Two or three days passed on, and she walked about as she used to. And now a strong desire seized her to see that wife of Lord Chetwynde whom she so dearly loved and so fondly remembered. She wondered that Lady Chetwynde had not come to see her. She was informed that Lady Chetwynde was ill. A deep sympathy then arose in her heart for the poor friendless lady—the fair girl whom she remembered—and whom she now pictured to herself as bereaved of her father, and scorned by her husband. For Mrs. Hart rightly divined the meaning of Lord Chetwynde's words. She thought long over this, and at last there arose within her a deep yearning to go and see this poor friendless orphaned girl, whose life had been so sad, and was still so mournful.

So one day, full of such tender feelings as these, and carrying in her mind the image of that beautiful young girl who once had been so dear to her, she went up herself to the room where Hilda staid, and asked the maid for Lady Chetwynde.

"She is ill," said the maid.

Mrs. Hart waved her aside with serene dignity and entered. The maid stood awe-struck. For Mrs. Hart had the air and the tone of a lady, and now when her will was aroused she very well knew how to put down an unruly servant. So she walked grandly past the maid, who looked in awe upon her stately figure, her white face, with its refined features, and her venerable hair, and passed through the half-opened door into Hilda's room.

Hilda had been sitting on the sofa, which was near the window. She was looking out abstractedly, thinking upon the great problem which lay before her, upon the solution of which she could not decide, when suddenly she became aware of some one in the room. She looked up. It was Mrs. Hart!

At the sight her blood chilled within her. Her face was overspread with an expression of utter horror. The shock was tremendous. She had forgotten all about the woman. Mrs. Hart had been to her like the dead, and now to see her thus suddenly was like the sight of the dead. Had the dead Earl come into her room and stood before her in the cerements of the grave she would not have been one whit more horrified, more bewildered.

But soon in that strong mind of hers reason regained its place. She saw how it had been, and though she still wondered how Mrs. Hart had come into her room, yet she prepared as best she might to deal with this new and unexpected danger. She arose, carefully closed the door, and then turning to Mrs. Hart she took her hand, and said, simply,

"I'm so glad to see you about again."

"Where is Lady Chetwynde?"

This was all that Mrs. Hart said, as she withdrew her hand and looked all about the room.

Like lightning Hilda's plan was decided upon.

"Wait a moment," said she; and, going into the ante-room, she sent her maid away upon some errand that would detain her for some time. Then she came back and motioned Mrs. Hart to a chair, while she took another.

"Did not Lord Chetwynde tell you about Lady Chetwynde?" she asked, very cautiously. She was anxious, first of all, to see how much Mrs. Hart knew.

"No," said Mrs. Hart, "he scarcely mentioned her name." She looked suspiciously at Hilda while she spoke.

"That is strange," said Hilda. "Had you any conversations with him?"

"Yes, several."

"And he did not tell you?"

"He told me nothing about her," said Mrs. Hart, dryly.

Hilda drew a long breath of relief.

"It's a secret in this house," said she, "but you must know it. I will tell you all about it. After the Earl's death Lady Chetwynde happened to come across some letters written by his son, in which the utmost abhorrence was expressed for the girl whom he had married. I dare say the letters are among the papers yet, and you can see them. One in particular was fearful in its denunciations of her. He reviled her, called her by opprobrious epithets, and told his father that he would never consent to see her. Lady Chetwynde saw all these. You know how high-spirited she was. She at once took fire at these insults, and declared that she would never consent to see Lord Chetwynde. She wrote him to that effect, and then departed from Chetwynde Castle forever."

Mrs. Hart listened with a stern, sad face, and said not a word.

"I went with her to a place where she is now living in seclusion. I don't think that Lord Chetwynde would have come home if he had not known that she had left. Hearing this, however, he at once came here."

"And you?" said Mrs. Hart, "what are you doing here? Are you the Lady Chetwynde of whom the servants speak?"

"I am, temporarily," said Hilda, with a sad smile. "It was Zillah's wish. She wanted to avoid a scandal. She sent off all the old servants, hired new ones, and persuaded me to stay here for a time as Lady Chetwynde. She found a dear old creature to nurse you, and never ceases to write about you and ask how you are."

"And you live here as Lady Chetwynde?" asked Mrs. Hart, sternly.

"Temporarily," said Hilda—"that was the arrangement between us. Zillah did not want to have the name of Chetwynde dishonored by stories that his wife had run away from him. She wrote Lord Chetwynde to that effect. When Lord Chetwynde arrived I saw him in the library, and he requested me to stay here for some months until he had arranged his plans for the future. It was very considerate in Zillah, but at the same time it is very embarrassing to me, and I am looking eagerly forward to the time when this deceit can be over, and I can rejoin my friend once more. I am so glad, my dear Mrs. Hart, that you came in. It is such a relief to have some one to whom I can unburden myself. I am very miserable, and I imagine all the time that the servants suspect me. You will, of course, keep this a profound secret, will you not, my dear Mrs. Hart? and help me to play this wretched part, which my love for Zillah has led me to undertake?"

Hilda's tone was that of an innocent and simple girl who found herself in a false position. Mrs. Hart listened earnestly without a word, except occasionally. The severe rigidity of her features never relaxed. What effect this story, so well told, produced upon her, Hilda could not know. At length, however, she had finished, and Mrs. Hart arose.

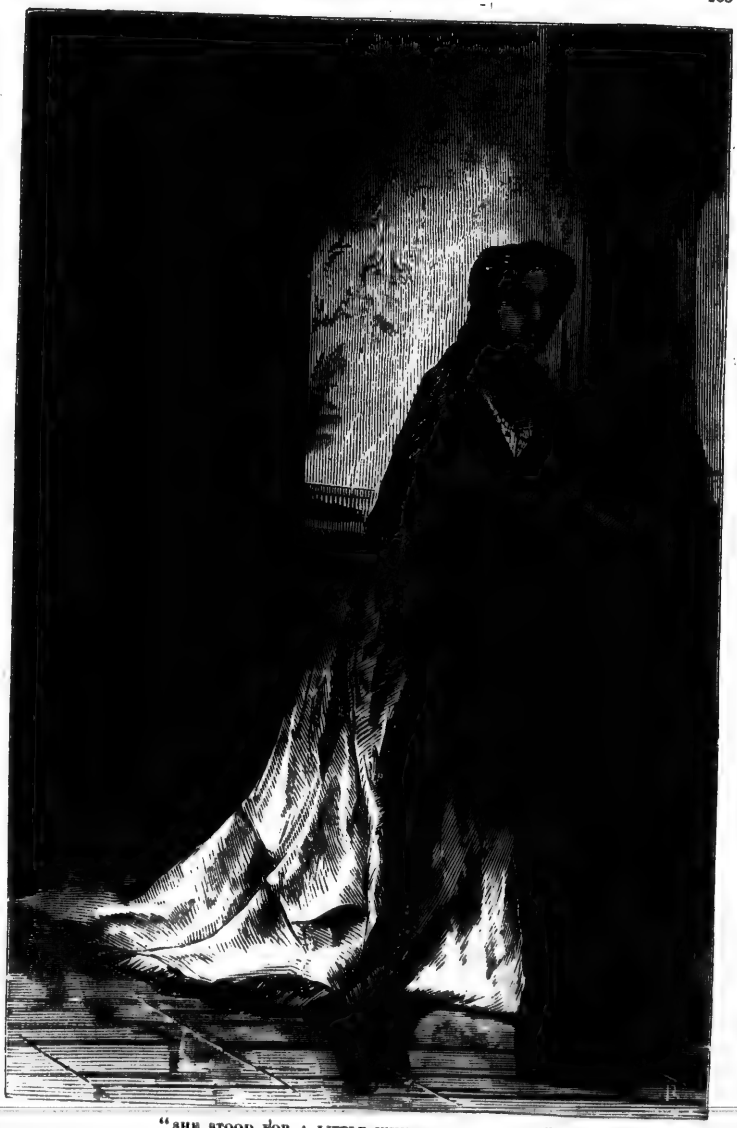
"You will keep Zillah's secret?" said Hilda, earnestly. "It is for the sake of Lord Chetwynde."

"You will never find me capable of doing anything that is against his interests," said Mrs. Hart, solemnly; and without a bow, or an adieu, she retired. She went back to her own room to ponder over this astonishing story.

Meanwhile, Hilda, left alone to herself, was not altogether satisfied with the impression which had been made on Mrs. Hart. She herself had played her part admirably—her story, long prepared in case of some sudden need like this, was coherent and natural. It was spoken fluently and unhesitatingly; nothing could have been better in its way, or more convincing; and yet she was not satisfied with Mrs. Hart's demeanor. Her face was too stern, her manner too frigid; the questions which she had asked spoke of suspicion. All these were unpleasant, and calculated to awaken her fears. Her position had always been one of extreme peril, and she had dreaded some visitor who might remember her face. She had feared the doctor most, and had carefully kept out of his way. She had not thought until lately of the possibility of Mrs. Hart's recovery. This came upon her with a suddenness that was bewildering, and the consequences she could not foretell.

And now another fear suggested itself. Might not Lord Chetwynde himself have some suspicions? Would not such suspicions account for his coldness and severity? Perhaps he suspected the truth, and was preparing some way in which she could be entrapped and punished. Perhaps his mysterious business in London related to this alone. The thought filled her with alarm, and now she rejoiced that Gualtier was on his track. She began to believe that she could never be safe until Lord Chetwynde was "removed." And if Lord Chetwynde, then others. Who was this Mrs. Hart that she should have any power of troubling her? Measures might easily be taken for silencing her forever, and for "removing" such a feeble old obstacle as this. Hilda knew means by which this could be effected. She

knew the way by
and she had nerve
The appearance
wynde Castle itsel
troubles. It was



"SHE STOOD FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND LISTENED."

knew the way by which the deed could be done, and she had nerve enough to do it.

The appearance of this new danger in Chetwynde Castle itself gave a new direction to her troubles. It was as though a gulf had suddenly yawned beneath her feet. All that night she lay deliberating as to what was best to do under the circumstances. Mrs. Hart was safe enough for a day or two, but what might she not do hereafter in the way of mischief? She could not be

got rid of, either, in an ordinary way. She had been so long in Chetwynde Castle that it seemed morally impossible to dislodge her. Certainly she was not one who could be paid and packed off to some distant place like the other servants. There was only one way to get rid of her, and to this one way Hilda's thoughts turned gloomily.

Over this thought she brooded through all the following day. Evening came, and twilight deepened into darkness. At about ten o'clock Hilda left her room and quietly descended the great staircase, and went over toward the chamber occupied by Mrs. Hart. Arriving at the door she stood without for a little while and listened. There was no noise. She gave a turn to the knob and found that the door was open. The room was dark. She has gone to bed, she thought. She went back to her own room again, and in about half an hour she returned. The door of Mrs. Hart's room remained ajar as she had left it. She pushed it farther open, and put her head in. All was still. There were no sounds of breathing there. Slowly and cautiously she advanced into the room. She drew nearer to the bed. There was no light whatever, and in the intense darkness no outline revealed the form of the bed to her. Nearer and nearer she drew to the bed, until at last she touched it. Gently, yet swiftly, her hands passed over its surface, along the quilts, up to the pillows. An involuntary cry burst from her—

The bed was empty!

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FROM LOVE TO VENGEANCE, AND FROM VENGEANCE TO LOVE.

On the night of this last event, before she retired to bed, Hilda learned more. Leaving Mrs. Hart's room, she called at the housekeeper's chambers to see if the missing woman might be there. The housekeeper informed her that she had left at an early hour that morning, without saying a word to any one, and that she herself had taken it for granted that her ladyship knew all about it. Hilda heard this without any comment; and then walked thoughtfully to her own room.

She certainly had enough care on her mind to occupy all her thoughts. The declaration of Gualtier was of itself an ill-omened event, and she no longer had that trust in his fidelity which she once had, even though he now might work in the hope of a reward. It seemed to her that with the loss of her old ascendency over him she would lose altogether his devotion; nor could the remembrance of his former services banish that deep distrust of him which, along with her bitter resentment of his rebellion, had arisen in her mind. The affair of Mrs. Hart seemed worse yet. Her sudden appearance, her sharp questionings, her cold incredulity, terminated at last by her prompt flight, were all circumstances which filled her with the most gloomy forebodings. Her troubles seemed now to increase every day, each one coming with startling suddenness, and each one being of that sort against which no precautions had been taken, or even thought of.

She passed an anxious day and a sleepless night. On the following morning a letter was brought to her. It had a foreign post-mark, and the address showed the handwriting of Gualtier. This at once brought back the old feelings about Lord Chetwynde, and she tore it open with feverish impatience, eager to know what the contents might be, yet half fearful of their import. It was written in that tone of respect which Gualtier had never lost but once, and which he had now resumed. He informed her that on leaving Chetwynde he had gone at once up to London, and found that Lord Chetwynde was stopping at the same hotel where he had put up last. He formed a bold design, which he put in execution, trusting to the fact that Lord Chetwynde had never seen him more than twice at the Castle, and on both occasions had seemed not even to have looked at him. He therefore got himself up very carefully in a foreign fashion, and, as he spoke French perfectly, he went to Lord Chetwynde and offered himself as a valet or courier. It happened that Lord Chetwynde actually needed a man to serve him in this capacity, a fact which Gualtier had found out in the hotel, and so the advent of the valet was quite welcome. After a brief conversation, and an inquiry into his knowledge of the languages and the routes of travel on the Continent, Lord Chetwynde examined his letters of recommendation, and, finding them very satisfactory, he took him into his employ. They remained two days longer in London, during which Gualtier made such good use of his time and opportunities that he managed to gain access to Lord Chetwynde's papers, but found among them nothing of any importance whatever, from which he concluded that all his papers of any consequence must have been deposited with his solicitors. At any rate it was impossible for him to find out any thing from this source.

Leaving London they went to Paris, where they passed a few days, but soon grew weary of the place; and Lord Chetwynde, feeling a kind of languor, which seemed to him like a premonition of disease, he decided to go to Germany. His first idea was to go to Baden, although it was not the season; but on his arrival at Frankfort he was so overcome by the fatigue of traveling that he determined to remain for a time in that city. His increasing languor, however, had alarmed him, and he had called in the most eminent physicians of the place, who, at the time the letter was written, were prescribing for him. The writer said that they did not seem to think that this illness had any thing very serious in it, and simply recommended certain changes of diet and various kinds of gentle exercise, but he added that in his opinion *there was something in it, and that this illness was more serious than was supposed.* As for the sick man himself, he was much discouraged. He had grown tired of his physicians and of Frankfort, and wished to go on to Baden, thinking that the change might do him good. He seemed anxious for constant change, and spoke as though he might leave Baden for some other German city, or perhaps go on to Italy, to which place his thoughts, for some reason or other, seemed always turning with eager impatience.

As Hilda read this letter, and took in the whole of its dark and hidden meaning, all her former agitation returned. Once more the ques-

tion arose which had before so greatly harassed her. The disappearance of Mrs. Hart, and the increasing dangers which had been gathering around her head, had for a time taken up her thoughts, but now her great, preoccupying care came back with fresh vehemence, and resumed more than its former sway. Mrs. Hart was forgotten as completely as though she had never existed. Gualtier's possible infidelity to her suggested itself no more; it was Lord Chetwynde and Lord Chetwynde only, his sickness, his peril, his doom, which came to her mind. On one side stood Love, pleading for his life; on the other Vengeance, demanding its sacrifice.

Shall he live, or shall he die?

This was the question which ever and ever rang in her soul. "Shall he live, or die? Shall he go down to death, doomed by me, and thus end all my hope, or shall he live to scorn me?" In his death there was the satisfaction of vengeance, but there was also the death of hope. In his death there was fresh security for herself; but in his death her own life would lie dead. On each side there were motives most powerful over a mind like hers, yet so evenly balanced that she knew not which way to turn, or in which way to incline. Death or life?—life or death? Thus the question came.

And the hours passed on; and every hour, she well knew, was freighted with calamity; every hour was dragging Lord Chetwynde on to that point at which the power to decide upon his fate would be hers no longer.

Why hesitate?

This was the form which the question took at last, and under which it forced itself more and more upon her. Why hesitate? To hesitate was of itself to doom him to death. If he was to be saved, there was no time for delay. He must be saved at once. If he was to be saved, she must act herself, and that, too, promptly and energetically. Her part could not be performed by merely writing a letter, for the letter might be delayed, or it might be miscarried, or it might be neglected and disobeyed. She could not trust the fulfillment of a command of mercy to Gualtier. She herself could alone fulfill such a purpose. She herself must act by herself.

As she thought of this her decision was taken. Yes, she would do it. She herself would arrest his fate, for a time at least. Yes—he should live, and she herself would fly to his aid, and stand by his side, and be the one who would snatch him from his doom.

Now, no sooner was this decision made than there came over her a strange thrill of joy and exultation. He should live! he should live! this was the refrain which rang in her thoughts. He should live; and she would be the life-giver. At last he would be forced to look upon her with eyes of gratitude at least, if not of affection. It should no longer be in his power to scorn her, or to turn away coldly and cruelly from her proffered hand. He should yet learn to look upon her as his best friend. He should learn to call her by tender names; and speak to her words of fondness, of endearment, and of love. Now, as deep as her despondency had been, so high rose her joy at this new prospect; and her hope, which rose out of this resolution, was bright to a degree which was commensurate with the darkness of her previous despair. He shall live; and he shall be mine—these were the words upon which her heart fed itself, which carried to that heart a wild and feverish joy, and drove away those sharp pangs which she had felt. And now the love which burned within her diffused through all her being those softer qualities which are born of love; and the hate and the vengeance upon which she had of late sustained her soul were forgotten. Into her heart there came a tenderness all feminine, and a thing unknown to her before that fateful day on which she had first seen Lord Chetwynde; a tenderness which filled her with a yearning desire to fly to the rescue of this man, whom she had but lately handed over to the assassin. She hungered and thirsted to be near him, to stand by his side, to see his face, to touch his hand, to hear his voice, to give to him that which should save him from the fate which she herself had dealt out to him by the hands of her own agent. It was thus that her love at last triumphed over her vengeance, and, sweeping onward, drove away all other thoughts and feelings.

Hers was the love of the tigress; but even the love of the tigress is yet love; and such love has its own profound depths of tenderness, its capacity of intense desire, its power of complete self-abnegation or of self-immolation—feelings which, in the tigress kind of love, are as deep as in any other, and perhaps even deeper.

But from her in that dire emergency the one thing that was required above all else was haste. That she well knew. There was no time for delay. There was one at the side of Lord Chetwynde whose heart knew neither pity nor remorse, whose hand never faltered in dealing its blow, and who watched every failing moment of his life with unshaken determination. To him her cruel and bloody behests had been committed in her mad hour of vengeance; those behests he was now carrying out as much for his own sake as for hers; accomplishing the fulfillment of his own purposes under the cloak of obedience to her orders. He was the destroying angel, and his mission was death. He could not know of the change which had come over her; nor could he dream of the possibility of a change. She alone could bring a reprieve from that death, and stay his hand.

Haste, then—she murmured to herself—oh, haste, or it will soon be too late! Fly! Leave every thing and fly! Every hour brings him nearer to death until that hour comes when you may save him from death. Haste, or it may be too late—and the mercy and the pity and the tenderness of love may be all unavailing!

It was with the frantic haste which was born of this new-found pity that Hilda prepared for her journey. Her preparations were not extensive. A little luggage sufficed. She did not wish a maid. She had all her life relied upon herself, and now set forth upon this fateful journey alone and unattended, with her heart filled with one feeling only, and only one hope. It needed but a short time to complete her preparations, and to announce to the astonished domestics her intention of going to the Continent. Without noticing their amazement, or caring for it, she ordered the carriage for the nearest station, and in a short time after her first decision she was seated in the cars and hurrying onward to London.

Arriving there, she made a short stay. She had some things to procure which were to her of infinite importance. Leaving the hotel, she went down Oxford Street till she came to a druggist's shop, which she entered, and, going up to the clerk, she handed him a paper, which looked like a doctor's prescription. The clerk took it, and, after looking at it, carried it to an inner office. After a time the proprietor appeared. He scanned Hilda narrowly, while she returned his glance with her usual haughtiness. The druggist appeared satisfied with his inspection.

"Madame," said he, politely, "the ingredients of this prescription are of such a nature that the law requires me to know the name and address of the purchaser, so as to enter them on the purchase book."

"My address," said Hilda, quietly, "is Mrs. Henderson, 51 Euston Square."

The druggist bowed, and entered the name carefully on his book, after which he himself prepared the prescription and handed it to Hilda.

She asked the price, and, on hearing it, flung down a sovereign, after which she was on the point of leaving without waiting for the change, when the druggist called her back.

"Madame," said he, "you are leaving without your change."

Hilda started, and then turning back she took the change and thanked him.

"I thought you said it was twenty shillings," she remarked, quietly, seeing that the druggist was looking at her with a strange expression.

"Oh no, madame; I said ten shillings."

"Ah! I misunderstood you," and with these words Hilda took her departure, carrying with her the precious medicine.

That evening she left London, and took the steamer for Ostend. Before leaving she had sent a telegraphic message to Gualtier at Frankfort, announcing the fact that she was coming on, and asking him, if he left Frankfort before her arrival, to leave a letter for her at the hotel, letting her know where they might go. This she did for a twofold motive: first, to let Gualtier know that she was coming; and secondly, to secure a means of tracking them if they went to another place. But the dispatch of this message filled her with fresh anxiety. She feared first that the message might not reach its destination in time; and then that Gualtier might utterly misunderstand her motive—a thing which, under the circumstances, he was certain to do—and, under this misapprehension, hurry up his work, so as to have it completed by the time of her arrival. These thoughts, with many others, agitated her so much that she gradually worked herself into an agony of fear; and the swiftest speed of steamboat or express train seemed slow to the desire of that stormy spirit, which would have forced its way onward, far beyond the speed which human contrivances may create, to the side of the man whom she longed to see and to save. The fever of her fierce anxiety, the vehemence of her desire, the intensity of her anguish, all worked upon her delicate organization with direful effect. Her brain became confused, and thoughts became dreams. For hours she lost all consciousness of surrounding objects. Yet amidst all this confusion of a diseased and overworked brain, and amidst this delirium of wild thought, there was ever prominent her one idea—her one purpose. How she passed that journey she could not afterward remember, but it was at length passed, and, following the guidance of that strong purpose, which kept its place in her mind when other things were lost, she at last stood in the station-house at Frankfort.

"Drive to the Hôtel Rothschild," she cried to the cabman whom she had engaged. "Quick! for your life!"

The cabman marked her agitation and frenzy.

He whipped up his horses, the cab dashed through the streets, and reached the hotel. Hilda hurried out and went up the steps. Tottering rather than walking, she advanced to a man who had come to meet her. He seemed to be the proprietor.

"Lord Chetwynde!" she gasped. "Is he here?" She spoke in German.

The proprietor shook his head.

"He left the day before yesterday."

Hilda staggered back with a low moan. She did not really think that he could be here yet, but she had hoped that he might be, and the disappointment was great.

"Is there a letter here," she asked, in a faint voice, "for Lady Chetwynde?"

"I think so. I'll see."

Hurrying away he soon returned with a letter in his hand.

"Are you the one to whom it is addressed?" he asked, with deep respect.

"I am Lady Chetwynde," said Hilda, and at the same time eagerly snatched the letter from his hand. On the outside she at once recognized the writing of Gualtier. She saw the address, "Lady Chetwynde." In an instant she tore it open, and read the contents.

The letter contained only the following words:

"FRANKFORT, HÔTEL ROTHSCHILD,
October 30, 1859.

"We leave for Baden to-day. Our business is progressing very favorably. We go to the Hôtel Français at Baden. If you come on you must follow us there. If we go away before your arrival I will leave a note for you."

The letter was as short as a telegram, and as unsatisfactory to a mind in such a state as hers. It had no signature, but the handwriting was Gualtier's.

Hilda's hand trembled so that she could scarcely hold it. She read it over and over again. Then she turned to the landlord.

"What time does the next train leave for Baden?" she asked.

"To-morrow morning at 5 A.M., miladi."

"Is there no train before?"

"No, miladi."

"Is there no steamer?"

"No, miladi—not before to-morrow morning. The five o'clock train is the first and the quickest way to go to Baden."

"I am in a great hurry," said Hilda, faintly. "I must be called in time for the five o'clock train."

"You shall be, miladi."

"Send a maid—and let me have my room now—as soon as possible—for I am worn out."

As she said this she tottered, and would have fallen, but the landlord supported her, and called for the maids. They hurried forward, and Hilda

was carried up to her room and tenderly put to bed. The landlord was an honest, tender-hearted German. Lord Chetwynde had been a guest of sufficient distinction to be well remembered by a landlord, and his ill health had made him more conspicuous. The arrival of this devoted wife, who herself seemed as ill as her husband, but who yet, in spite of weakness, was hastening to him with such a consuming desire to get to him, affected most profoundly this honest landlord, and all others in the hotel. That evening, then, Hilda's faith and love and constancy formed the chief theme of conversation; the visitors of the hotel heard the sad story from the landlord, and deep was the pity, and profound the sympathy, which were expressed by all. To the ordinary pathos of this affecting example of conjugal love some additional power was lent by the extreme beauty, the excessive prostration and grief, and, above all, the illustrious rank of this devoted woman.

Hilda was put to bed, but there was no sleep for her. The fever of her anxiety, the shock of her disappointment, the tumult of her hopes and fears, all made themselves felt in her overworked brain. She did not take the five o'clock train on the following day. The maid came to call her, but found her in a high fever, eager to start, but quite unable to move. Before noon she was delirious.

In that delirium her thoughts wandered over those scenes which for the past few months had been uppermost in her mind. Now she was shut up in her chamber at Chetwynde Castle reading the Indian papers; she heard the roll of carriage wheels; she prepared to meet the new-comer face to face. She followed him to the morning-room, and there listened to his fierce maledictions. On the occasion itself she had been dumb before him, but in her delirium she had words of remonstrance. These words were expressed in every varying shade of entreaty, deprecation, conciliation, and prayer. Again she watched a stern, forbidding face over the dinner-table, and sought to appease by kind words the just wrath of the man she loved. Again she held out her hand, only to have her humble advances repelled in coldest scorn. Again she saw him leave her forever without a word of farewell—without even a notice of his departure, and she remained to give herself up to vengeance.

That delirium carried her through many past events. Gualtier again stood up before her in rebellion, proud, defiant, merciless, asserting himself, and enforcing her submission to his will. Again there came into her room, suddenly, and like a spectre, the awful presence of Mrs. Hart, with her white face, her stern looks, her sharp inquiries, and her ominous words. Again she pursued this woman to her own room, in the dark, and ran her hands over the bed, and found that bed empty.

But Lord Chetwynde was the central object of her delirious fancies. It was to him that her thoughts reverted from brief wanderings over reminiscences of Gualtier and Mrs. Hart. Whatever thoughts she might have about these, those thoughts would always at last revert to him. And with him it was not so much the past that suggested itself to her diseased imagination as the future. That future was sufficiently dark and terrible to be portrayed in fearful colors by her incoherent ravings. There were whispered words—words of frightful meaning, words which expressed those thoughts which in her sober senses she would have died rather than reveal. Had any one been standing by her bedside who knew English, he might have learned from her words a story of fearful import—a tale which would have chilled his blood, and which would have shown him how far different this sick woman was from the fond, self-sacrificing wife, who had excited the sympathy of all in the hotel. But there was none who could understand her. The doctor knew no language beside his own, except a little French; the maids knew nothing but German. And so it was that while Hilda unconsciously revealed the whole of those frightful secrets which she carried shut up within her breast, that revelation was not intelligible to any of those who were in contact with her. Well was it for her at that time that she had chosen to come away without her maid; for had that maid been with her then she would have learned enough of her mistress to send her flying back to England in horror, and to publish abroad the awful intelligence.

Thus a week passed—a week of delirium, of ravings, of incoherent speeches, unintelligible to all those by whom she was surrounded. At length her strong constitution triumphed over the assaults of disease. The fever was allayed, and sense returned; and with returning sense there came the full consciousness of her position. The one purpose of her life rose again within her mind, and even while she was too weak to move she was eager to be up and away.

"How long will it be," she asked of the doctor, "before I can go on my journey?"

"If every thing is favorable, miladi," answered the doctor, "as I hope it will be, you may be able to go in about a week. It will be a risk, but you are so excited that I would rather have you go than stay."

"A week!" exclaimed Hilda, despairingly. "I can not wait so long as that. No. I will go before then—or else I will die."

"If you go before a week," said the doctor, warningly, and with evident anxiety, "you will risk your life."

"Very well then, I will risk my life," said Hilda. "What is life worth now?" she murmured, with a moan of anguish. "I must and will go on, if I die for it—and in three days."

The doctor made no reply. He saw her desperation, and perceived that any remonstrance would be worse than useless. To keep such a resolute and determined spirit chained here in a sick-chamber would be impossible. She would chafe at the confinement so fiercely that a renewal of the fever would be inevitable. She would have to be allowed her own way. Most deeply did he commiserate this devoted wife, and much did he wonder how it had happened that her husband had gone off from her thus, at a time when he himself was threatened with illness. And now, as before, those kindly German hearts in the hotel, on learning this new outburst of conjugal love, felt a sympathy which was beyond all expression. To none of them had there ever before been known any thing approaching to so piteous a case as this.

The days passed. Hilda was avaricious about every new sign of increasing strength. Her

strong determination, her intense desire, and her powerful will, at last triumphed over bodily pain and weakness. It was as she said, and on the third day she managed to drag herself from her bed and prepare for a fresh journey. In preparation for this, however, she was compelled to have a maid to accompany her, and she selected one of those who had been her attendants, an honest, simple-hearted, affectionate German girl—Gretchen by name, one who was just suited to her in her present situation.

She made the journey without any misfortune. On reaching Baden she had to be lifted into the cab. Arriving at the Hôtel Français, she reached it in a state of extreme prostration, and had to be carried to her room. She asked for a letter. There was one for her. Caroline had not been neglectful, but had written as she was very much like the last.

"Bayern, Hôtel Européen, November 3, 1859.

"We leave for Munich to-day, and will stop at the Hôtel des Etrangers. Business progressing most favorably. If we go away from Munich I will leave a note for you."

The letter was dated November 2, but it was now the 10th of that month, and Hilda was far behind time. She had nerved herself up to this effort, and the hope of finding the object of her search at Baden had sustained her. But her new-found strength was now utterly exhausted by the fatigue of travel, and the new disappointment which she had experienced created discouragement and despondency. This told still more upon her strength, and she was compelled to wait here for two days, chafing and fretting against her weakness.

Nothing could exceed the faithful attention of Gretchen. She had heard at Frankfort, from the gossip of the servants, the story of her mistress, and all her German sentiment was roused in behalf of one so sorrowful and so beautiful. Her natural kindness of heart also led to the utmost devotion to Hilda, and, so far as careful and incessant attention could accomplish any thing, all was done that was possible. By the 13th of November Hilda was ready to start once more, and on that morning she left for Munich.

This journey was more fatiguing than the last. In her weak state she was almost overcome. Twice she fainted away in the cars, and all of Gretchen's anxious care was required to bring her to her destination. The German maid implored her with tears to get out at some of the towns on the way. But Hilda resolutely refused. She hoped to find rest at Munich, and to stop short of that place seemed to her to endanger her prospect of success. Again, as before, the strong soul triumphed over the infirmity of the body, and the place of her destination was at last attained.

She reached it more dead than alive. Gretchen lifted her into a cab. She was taken to the Hôtel des Etrangers. At the very first moment of her entrance into the hall she had asked a breathless question of the servant who appeared:

"Is Lord Chetwynde here?"

"Lord Chetwynde? No. He has gone."

"Gone!" said Hilda, in a voice which was like a groan of despair. "Gone! When?"

"Nearly a week ago," said the servant.

At this Hilda's strength again left her utterly, and she fell back almost senseless. She was carried to her room. Then she rallied by a mighty effort, and sent Gretchen to see if there was a letter for her. In a short time the maid reappeared, bringing another of those welcome yet tantalizing notes, which always seemed ready to mock her, and to lure her on to fresh disappointment. Yet her impatience to read its contents had in no way diminished, and it was with the same impetuous fever of curiosity as before that she tore open the envelope and devoured the contents. This note was much like the others, but somewhat more ominous.

It read as follows:

"Munich, Hôtel des Etrangers, *November* 9, 1859.

"We leave for Lausanne to-day. We intend to stop at the Hôtel Gibbon. It is not probable that any further journey will be made. Business most favorable, and prospects are that every thing will soon be brought to a successful issue."

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE ANGUISH OF THE HEART.

As Hilda read these ominous words a chill like that of death seemed to strike to her inmost soul. Her disappointment on her arrival here had already been bitter enough. She had looked upon Munich as the place where she would surely find the end of her journey, and obtain the reward of her labors. But now the object of her search was once more removed, and a new journey more fatiguing than the others was set before her. Could she bear it?—she who even now felt the old weakness, and something even worse, coming back irresistibly upon her. Could she, indeed, bear another journey? This question she put to herself half hopelessly; but almost immediately her resolute soul asserted itself, and proudly answered it. Bear such a journey? Ay, this journey she could bear, and not only this, but many more. Even though her old weakness was coming back over her frail form, still she rose superior to that weakness, and persisted in her determination to go on, and still on, without giving up her purpose, till she reached Lord Chetwynde, even though it should only be at the moment of her arrival to drop dead at his feet.

There was more now to stimulate her than the determination of a resolute and invincible will. The words of that last note had a dark and ominous meaning, which affected her more strongly by far than any of the others. The messages which they bore had not before so fearful an import as this.

The first said, that "the business" was progressing *very favorably*.

The second, that [illegible] progressing *most favorably*.

This last one told her that the business *would soon be brought to a successful issue*.

Well she knew the meaning of these words. In these different messages she saw the many successive stages of the terrible [illegible] which was going on, and to avert which she had endured so much, at the cost of such suffering to herself. She saw the form of Lord Chetwynde failing more and more every day, and still, while he struggled against the approach of insidious disease, yielding, in spite of himself, to its resistless

progress. She saw him going from place to place, summoning the physicians of each town where he stopped, and giving up both town and physicians in despair. She saw, also, how all the time there stood by his side one who was filled with one dark purpose, in the accomplishment of which he was perseveringly cruel and untiringly patient—one who watched the growing weakness of his victim with cold-blooded interest, noting every decrease of strength, and every sign which might give token of the end—one, too, who thought that she was hastening after him to join in his work, and was only delaying in order to join him when all was over, so as to give him her congratulations, and bestow upon him the reward which he had made her promise that she would grant.

Thoughts like these filled her with madness. Wretched and almost hopeless, prostrated by her weakness, yet consumed by an ardent desire to rush onward and save the dying man from the grasp of the destroyer, her soul became a prey to a thousand contending emotions, and endured the extreme of the anguish of suspense. Such a struggle as this proved too much for her. One night was enough to prostrate her once more to that stage of utter weakness which made all hope of travel impossible. In that state of prostration her mind still continued active, and the thoughts that never ceased to come were those which prevented her from rallying readily. For the one idea that was ever present was this, that while she was thus helpless, *her work was still going on*—that work which she had ordered and directed. That emissary whom she had sent out was now, as she well knew, fulfilling her mandate but too zealously. The power was now all in his own hands. And she herself—what could she do? He had already defied her authority—would he now give up his purpose, even if she wished? She might have telegraphed from London a command to him to stop all further proceedings till she came; but, even if she had done so, was it at all probable that he, after what had happened, would have obeyed? She had not done so, because she did not feel in a position to issue commands any longer in her old style. The servant had assumed the air and manner of a master, and the message which she had sent had been non-committal. She had relied upon the prospect of her own speedy arrival upon the scene, and upon her own power of confronting him, and reducing him to obedience in case of his refusal to full in with her wishes.

But now it had fallen out far differently from what she had expected, and the collapse of her own strength had ruined all. Now every day and every hour was taking hope away from her, and giving it to that man who, from being her tool, had risen to the assertion of mastership over her. Now every moment was dragging away from her the man whom she sought so eagerly—dragging him away from her love to the darkness of that place to which her love and her longing might never penetrate.

Now, also, there arose within her the agonies of remorse. Never before had she understood the fearful meaning of the word. Such a feeling had never stirred her heart since she handed over to the betrayer her life-long friend, her almost sister, the one who so loved her, the trustful, the innocent, the affectionate Zillah; such a feeling had not interfered with her purpose when Gualtier returned to tell of his success, and to mingle with his story the recital of Zillah's love and longing after her. But now it was different. Now she had handed over to that same betrayer one who had become dearer to her than life itself—one, too, who had grown dearer still ever since that moment when she had first resolved to save him. If she had never arrived at such a resolution—if she had borne with the struggles of her heart, and the tortures of her suspense—if she had fought out the battle in solitude and by herself, alone at Chetwynde, her sufferings would have been great, it is true, but they would never have arisen to the proportions which they now assumed. They would never have reduced her to this anguish of soul which, in its reaction upon the body, thus deprived her of all strength and hope. That moment when she had decided against vengeance, and in favor of pity, had borne for her a fearful fruit. It was the point at which all her love was let loose suddenly from that repression which she had striven to maintain over it, and rose up to gigantic proportions, filling all her thoughts, and overshadowing all other feelings. That love now pervaded all her being, occupied all her thoughts, and absorbed all her spirit. Once it was love; now it had grown to something more, it had become a frenzy; and the more she yielded to its overmastering power, the more did that power enchain her.

Tormented and tortured by such feelings as these, her weary, overworn frame sank once more, and the sufferings of Frankfort were renewed at Munich. On the next day after her arrival she was unable to leave. For day after day she lay prostrate, and all her impatient eagerness to go onward, and all her resolution, profited nothing when the poor frail flesh was so weak. Yet, in spite of all this, her soul was strong; and that soul, by its indomitable purpose, roused up once more the shattered forces of the body. A week passed away, but at the end of that week she arose to stagger forward.

Her journey to Lausanne was made somehow—she knew not how—partly by the help of Gretchen, who watched over her incessantly with inexhaustible devotion—partly through the strength of her own forceful will, which kept before her the great end which was to crown so much endeavor. She was a shattered invalid on this journey. She felt that another such a journey would be impossible. She hoped that this one would end her severe trials. And so, amidst hope and fear, her soul sustained her, and she went on. Such a journey as this to one less exhausted would have been one memorable on account of its physical and mental anguish, but to Hilda, in that extreme of suffering, it was not memorable at all. It was less than a dream. It was a blank. How it passed she knew not. Afterward she only could remember that in some why it did pass.

On the twenty-second day of November she reached Lausanne. Gretchen lifted her out of the coach, and supported her as she tottered into the Hôtel Gibbon. A man was standing in the doorway. At first he did not notice the two women, but something in Hilda's appearance struck him, and he looked earnestly at her.

An exclamation burst from him.

"My God!" he groaned.

HILDA'S ARRIVAL AT THE HOTEL GIBBON.

For a moment he stood staring at them, and then advanced with a rapid pace.

It was Gualtier.

Hilda recognized him, but said nothing. She could not speak a word. She wished to ask for something, but dreaded to ask that question, for she feared the reply.

In that interval of fear and hesitation Gualtier had leisure to see, in one brief glance, all the change that had come over her who had once been so strong, so calm, so self-reliant, so unmoved by the passions, the feelings, and the weaknesses of ordinary humanity. He saw and shuddered.

Thin and pale and wan, she now stood before him, tottering feebly with unsteady step, and staying herself on the arm of her maid. Her cheeks, which, when he last saw them, were full and rounded with the outlines of youth and health, were now hollow and sunken. Around her eyes were those dark clouded marks which are the sure signs of weakness and disease. Her hands, as they grasped the arms of the maid, were thin and white and emaciated. Her lips were bloodless. It was the face of Hilda, indeed, but Hilda in sorrow, in suffering, and in grief—such a face as he had never imagined. But there were some things in that face which belonged to the Hilda of old, and had not changed. The eyes still flashed dark and piercing; they at least had not failed; and still their penetrating gaze rested upon him with no diminution in their power. Still the rich masses of ebon hair wreathed themselves in voluminous folds, and from out the luxuriant black masses of that hair the white face looked forth with its pallor rendered more awful from the contrast. Yet now that white face was a face of agony, and the eyes which, in their mute entreaty, were turned toward him, were fixed and staring. As he came up to her she grasped his arm; her lips moved, but for a time no audible sound escaped. At length she spoke, but it was in a whisper:

"*Is he alive?*"

And that was all that she said. She stood there panting, and gasping for breath, awaiting his reply with a certain awful suspense.

"Yes, my lady," said Gualtier, in a kind of bewilderment, as though he had not yet got over the shock of such an apparition. "He is alive yet."

"God be thanked!" moaned Hilda, in a low voice. "I have arrived in time—at last. He must be saved—and he shall be saved. Come."

She spoke this last word to Gualtier. By her

words, as well as by her face and manner, he saw that some great change had come over her, but why it was, he knew not yet. He plainly perceived, however, that she had turned from her purpose, and now no longer desired the death of the man whom she had commissioned him to destroy. In that moment of hurried thought he wondered much, but, from his knowledge of the recent past, he made a conjecture which was not far from the truth.

"Come," said Hilda. "I have something to say to you. I wish to see you alone. Come."

And he followed her into the hotel.

CHAPTER L.

BLACK BILL.

On the day after his meeting with Lord Chetwynde Obed had intended to start for Naples. Lord Chetwynde had not chosen to tell Obed his real name; but this maintenance of his incognito was not at all owing to any love of mystery, or any desire to keep a secret. He chose to be "Windham" because Obed thought him so, and he had no reason for being otherwise with him. He thought, also, that to tell his real name might involve a troublesome explanation, which was not desirable, especially since there was no need for it. Had that explanation been made, had the true name been made known at this interview, a flood of light would have poured down upon this dark matter, and Obed would have had at last the key to every thing. But this revelation was not made, and Windham took his departure from his friend.

On the following morning, while Obed was dressing, a note was brought to his room. It was from the police, and requested a visit from him, as matters of importance had been found out with reference to the case which he had intrusted to them. At this unexpected message Obed's start for Naples was postponed, and he hurried off as rapidly as possible to the office.

On arriving there he soon learned the cause of the note. An event had occurred which was in the highest degree unexpected, and had not arisen out of the ordinary inquiries of the detectives at all. It seems that on the evening of the previous day a man had come voluntarily to lodge information against this same Gualtier for the purpose of having a search made after him. He was one of the worst characters in London, well known to the police, and recognized by them, and by his own ruffian companions, under the name of "Black Bill." In order that Obed might himself hear what he had to say, they had detained the informer, and sent for him.

Obed was soon brought face to face with this new actor in the great tragedy of Zillah's life. He was a short, stout, thick-set man, with bull neck, broad shoulders, deep chest, low brow, flat nose, square chin, and small black eyes, in which there lay a mingled expression of ferocity and cunning. His very swarthy complexion, heavy black beard, and thick, matted, coal-black hair, together with his black eyes, were sufficiently marked to make him worthy of the name of "Black Bill." Altogether, he looked like a perfect type of perfect ruffianism; and Obed involuntarily felt a cold shudder pass over him as he thought of Zillah falling into the hands of any set of villains of which this man was one.

On entering the room Black Bill was informed that Obed was largely interested in the affair which he had made known, and was bidden to tell his story once more. Thereupon Black Bill took a long and very comprehensive stare at Obed from head to foot, after which he went on to narrate his story.

He had been engaged in the month of June, he said, by a man who gave his name as Richards. He understood that he was to take part in an enterprise which was illegal, but attended with no risk whatever. It was simply to assist in sinking a vessel at sea. Black Bill remarked, with much naïveté, that he always was scrupulous in obeying the laws; but just at that time he was out of tin, and yielded to the temptation. He thought it was a case where the vessel was to be sunk for the sake of the insurance. Such things were very common, and friends of his had assisted before in similar enterprises. The price offered for his services was not large—only fifty pounds—and this also made him think it was only some common case.

He found that three other men had also been engaged. They were ordered to go to Marseilles, and wait till they were wanted. Money was given them for the journey, and a certain house was mentioned as the place where they should stay.

They did not have long to wait. In a short time the man who had employed them called on them, and took them down to the harbor, where they found a very handsome yacht. In about an hour afterward he returned, accompanied this time by a young and beautiful lady. Black Bill and all the men were very much struck by her appearance. They saw very well that she belonged to the upper classes. They saw also that their employer treated her with the deepest respect, and seemed almost like her servant. They heard her once call him "*Mr. Gualtier*," and knew by this that the name "Richards" was an assumed one. They all wondered greatly at her appearance, and could not understand what was to be her part in the adventure. Judging from what they heard of the few words she addressed to this Gualtier, they saw that she was expecting to sail to Naples, and was very eager to arrive there.

At last the second night came. Gualtier summoned Black Bill at midnight, and they both went into the hold, where they bored holes. The other men had meanwhile got the boat in readiness, and had put some provisions and water in her. At last the holes were bored, and the vessel began to fill rapidly. Black Bill was ordered into the boat, Gualtier saying that he was going to fetch the young lady. The men all thought then that she had been brought on board merely to be forced into taking part in the sinking of the vessel. None of them understood the idea of the thing at all.

They waited for a time, according to Black Bill. The night was intensely dark, and they could hear nothing, when suddenly Gualtier came to the boat and got in.

"Where's the girl?" said Black Bill.

"She won't come," said Gualtier, who at the same time unloosed the boat. "She won't come," he repeated. "Give way, lads."

The "lads" refused, and a great outcry arose. They swore that they would not leave the vessel without the girl, and that if he did not go back instantly and get her, they would pitch him overboard and save her themselves. Black Bill told him they thought it was only an insurrance business, and nothing like this.

Gualtier remained quite calm during this outcry. As soon as he could make himself heard he told them, in a cool voice, that he was armed with a revolver, and would shoot them all down if they did not obey him. He had hired them for this, he said, and they were in for it. If they obeyed him, he would pay them when they got ashore; if not, he would blow their brains out. Black Bill said that at this threat he drew his own pistol and snapped it at Gualtier. It would not go off. Gualtier then laughed, and said that pistols which had a needle run down the nipple did not generally explode—by which Black Bill saw that his pistol had been tampered with.

There was a long altercation, but the end of it was that Gualtier gave them a certain time to decide, after which he swore that he would shoot them down. He was armed, he was determined; they were unarmed, and at his mercy; and the end of it was, they yielded to him and rowed away. One thing which materially influenced them was, that they had drifted away from the schooner, and she had been lost in the deep darkness of the night. Besides, before their altercation was over, they all felt sure that the vessel had sunk. So they rowed on sullenly all that night and all the next day, with only short intervals of rest, guarded all the time by Gualtier, who, pistol in hand, kept them to their work.

They reached the coast at a point not far from Leghorn. It was a wild spot, with wooded shores. Here Gualtier stepped out, paid them, and ordered them to go to Leghorn. As for himself, he swore they should never see him again. They took the money, and rowed off for a little distance along the shore, when Black Bill made them put him ashore. They did so, and rowed on. He plunged into the woods, and walked back till he got on Gualtier's trail, which he followed up. Black Bill here remarked, with a mixture of triumph and mock contrition, that an accident in his early life had sent him to Australia, in which country he had learned how to notice the track of animals or of man in any place, however wild. Here Gualtier had been careless, and his track was plain. Black Bill thus followed him from place to place, and after Gualtier reached the nearest railway station was easily able to keep him in sight.

In this way he had kept him in sight through North Italy, over the Alps, through Germany, and, finally, to London, where he followed him to the door of his lodgings. Here he had made inquiries, and had learned that Gualtier was living there under the name of Mr. Brown; that he had only been there a few weeks, but seemed inclined to stay permanently, as he had brought there his clothes, some furniture, and all his papers, together with pictures and other valuables. Black Bill then devoted himself to the task of watching him, which he kept up for some time, till one day Gualtier left by rail for the west, and never returned. Black Bill had watched ever since, but had seen nothing of him. He thought he must have gone to America.

Here Black Bill paused for a while, and Obed asked him one or two questions.

"What is the reason," he asked, "that you did not give information to the police at first, instead of waiting till now?"

"A question like that there," said Black Bill, "is enough to answer. You see I wanted for to play my hown little game. I wanted fur to find out who the gal was. If so be as I'd found out that, I'd have had somethin' to work on. That's fust an' foremost. An' next, you understand, I was anxious to git a hold of him so as to be able to pay off that oncommon black score as I had agin him. Arter humbuggin' me, hocusin' my pistol, an' threat'nin' murder to me, an' makin' me work wuss than a galley-slave in that thar boat, I felt petiklar anxious to pay him off in the same coin. That's the reason why I sot up a watch on him on my own account, instead of telling the beaks."

"Do you know," asked Obed again, "what has become of the others that were with you in the boat?"

"Never have laid eyes on 'em since that blessed arternoon when I stepped ashore to follow Gualtier. P'r'aps they've been scrubbed—p'r'aps they're sarvin' their time out in the galleys—p'r'aps they've jined the Italian army—p'r'aps they've got back here again. Wot's become of them his Honor here knows better'n me."

After this Black Bill went on, and told all the rest that he had to say. He declared that he had watched Gualtier's lodgings for more than three months, expecting that he would return. At last he disguised himself and went there to make inquiries. The keeper of the house told him that nothing had been heard from "Mr. Brown" since he left, and he had packed away all his things in hope of his return. But a Liverpool paper had recently been sent to him with a marked paragraph, giving an account of the recovery of the body of a man who had been drowned, and who in all respects seemed to resemble his late lodger. Why it had been sent to him he did not know; but he thought that perhaps some paper had been found in the pockets of the deceased, and the authorities had sent this journal to the address, thinking that the notice might thus reach his friends.

After this Black Bill began to lose hope of success. He did not believe that Gualtier had perished, but that it was a common trick to give rise to a belief in the mind of his lodging-house keeper that he had met with his death. In this belief he waited for a short time to see if any fresh intelligence turned up; but at length, as Gualtier made no sign, and Black Bill's own resources were exhausted, he had concluded that it would be best to make known the whole circumstance to the police.

Such was the substance of his narrative. It was interrupted by frequent questions; but Black Bill told a coherent tale, and did not contradict himself. There was not the slightest doubt in the minds of his hearers that he was one of the greatest scoundrels that ever lived, but at the same time there was not the slightest doubt that on this occasion he had not taken part willingly against the life of the young girl. He and his associates, it was felt, had been tricked and overreached by the superior cunning of Gualtier. They saw also, by Black Bill's account, that this

Gualtier was bold and courageous to a high degree, with a cool calculation and a daring that were not common among men. He had drawn these men into the commission of what they expected would be some slight offense, and then forced them to be his unwilling allies in a foul murder. He had paid them a small price for the commission of a great crime. He had bullied them, threatened them, and made them his slaves by his own clever management and the force of his own nature, and that, too, although these very men were, all of them, blood-stained ruffians, the most reckless among the dregs of society. From Black Bill's story Obed gained a new view of Gualtier.

After Black Bill had been dismissed, the lodging-house keeper, who had been sent for, made his appearance. His account was quite in accordance with what had been said. This man, whom he called *Brown*, had taken lodgings with him in May last, and had staid a few weeks. He then had been absent for a fortnight or so. On his return he passed a few days in the house, and then left, since which time he had not been heard of. The Liverpool paper which had been sent him gave the only hint as the possible cause of his absence. In reply to an inquiry from Obed the landlord stated that Mr. Brown's effects seemed to be very valuable. There was a fine piano, a dozen handsome oil-paintings, a private desk, an iron box, a jewel box, and a trunk, which, from its weight, was filled with something perhaps of value. On the whole, he could not think that such things would be left by any one without some effort to regain possession of them. If they were sold at a sacrifice, they would bring a very large sum.

The lodging-house keeper was then allowed to take his departure, after which Obed and the magistrate discussed for some time the new appearance which had been given to this affair. Their conclusions were similar, in most respects.

It seemed to them, first, that this Gualtier, whose names were so numerous, had planned his crime with a far-reaching ingenuity not often to be met with, and that after the accomplishment of his crime he was still as ingenious in his efforts after perfect concealment. He had baffled the police of France, of Italy, and of England thus far. He had also baffled completely that one enemy who had so long a time followed on his track. His last act in leaving his lodgings was well done—though putting the notice in the Liverpool paper, and sending it to the landlord, seemed more clumsy than his usual proceedings. It was readily concluded that the notice in that paper was only a ruse, in order to secure more perfect concealment, or, perhaps, elude pursuit more effectually.

It seemed also most likely, under the circumstances, that he had actually gone as far as Liverpool, and from that port to America. If that were the case it would be difficult, if not impossible, ever to get on his track or discover him. The only chance appeared to be in the probability that he would send, in some way or other, for those things which he had left in the lodging-house. Judging by the enumeration which the landlord had given, they were too valuable to be lost, and in most cases the owner would make some effort to recover them. The magistrate said that he would direct the landlord to keep the things carefully, and, if any inquiry ever came after them, to give immediate information to the police. This was evidently the only way of ever catching Gualtier.

The motive for this crime appeared quite plain to these inquirers. Judging by the facts, it seemed as though Gualtier and Hilda had been lovers, and had planned this so as to secure all the property of the younger sister. To Obed the motive was still more plain, though he did not tell what he knew—namely, the important fact that Hilda was not the sister at all of her victim, and that her own property was small in comparison with that of the one at whose life she aimed. He thought that to tell this even to the police would be a violation of sacred confidence. After the commission of the crime it seemed plain that these criminals had taken to flight together, most probably to America. This they could easily do, as their funds were all portable.

A careful look-out at the lodging-house was evidently the only means by which the track of the fugitives could be discovered. Even this would take a long time, but it was the only thing that could be done.

After this a careful examination was made of the things which Gualtier had left behind at the lodging-house. The pictures were found to be very valuable; the piano, also, was new—one of Collard's—and estimated to be worth one hundred and fifty pounds. The jewel box was found to contain articles of great value, some diamond rings, and turquoise and pearl. Many of the things looked like keepsakes, some of them having inscriptions, such as "To M.—from G.," "To M.—from L.," "From Mother." These seemed like things which no living man could willingly give up. How could it be known that Gualtier had indeed given up such sacred possessions as these?

On opening the trunks, one was found to contain books, chiefly French novels, and the other clothes. None of these gave any fresh clew to the home or the friends of the fugitive.

Last of all was the writing-desk. This was opened with intense curiosity. It was hoped that here something might be discovered.

It was well filled with papers. But a short examination served to show that, in the first place, the papers were evidently considered very valuable by the owner; and, in the second place, that they were of no earthly value to any one else. They were, in short, three different manuscript novels, whose soiled and faded appearance seemed to speak of frequent offerings to different publishers, and as frequent refusals. There they lay, still cherished by the author, inclosed in his desk, lying there to be claimed perhaps at some future time. There were, in addition to these, a number of receipted bills, and some season tickets for railways and concerts—and that was all.

Nothing, therefore, was discovered from this examination. Yet the result gave hope. It seemed as if no man would leave things like these—this piano, these pictures, these keepsakes—and never seek to get them again. Those very manuscript novels, rejected as they had been, were still things which the author would not willingly give up. The chances, therefore, were very great that at some time, in some way, some application would be made for this property. And on this the magistrate relied confidently.

Obed spent another day in London, and had another interview with the magistrate. He found, however, that nothing more could be done by him, or by any one else, at present, and so he returned to Naples *via* Marseilles. He called on the prefect of police at the latter city to acquaint him with the latest intelligence of this affair; heard that nothing more had been discovered about Mathilde, and then went on his way, arriving in due time at his destination. He told his sister the result of his journey, but to Zillah he told nothing at all about it. Having done all that man could do, Obed now settled himself down once more in Naples, beguiling his time between the excitement of excursions with his friends, and the calm of domestic life with his family. Naples, on the whole, seemed to him the pleasantest spot to stay in that he had seen for a long time, and he enjoyed his life there so much that he was in no hurry to leave it.

CHAPTER LI.

A STARTLING PROPOSAL.

Obed and his family thus remained in Naples, and Zillah at last had an occupation. The new duties which she had undertaken gave her just enough of employment to fill the day and occupy her thoughts. It was a double blessing. In the first place it gave her a feeling of independence; and again, and especially, it occupied her thoughts, and thus prevented her mind from preying upon itself. Then she was able to gain alleviation for the troubles that had so long oppressed her. She felt most profoundly the change from the feeling of poverty and dependence to one of independence, when she was actually "getting her own living." She knew that her independence was owing to the delicate generosity of Obed Chute, and that under any other circumstances she would probably have had no refuge from starvation; but her gratitude to her friends did not lessen at all her own self-complacency. There was a childish delight in Zillah over her new position, which was due, perhaps, to the fact that she had always looked upon herself as hopelessly and incurably dull; but now the discovery that she could actually fill the position of music-teacher brought her a strange triumph, which brightened many a dark hour.

Zillah already had understood and appreciated the delicate feeling and high-toned generosity of Obed Chute and his sister. Nothing could increase the deep admiration which she felt for these simple, upright, honest souls, whose pure affection for her had proved such a blessing. If there had been nothing else, her very gratitude to them would have been a stimulus such as the ordinary governess never has. Under such a stimulus the last vestige of Zillah's old willfulness died out. She was now a woman, tried in the crucible of sorrow, and in that fiery trial the dross had been removed, and only the pure gold remained. The wayward, impetuous girl had reached her last and fullest development, and she now stood forth in adversity and affliction, right noble in her character—an earnest woman, devoted, tender, enthusiastic, generous.

The fondness and admiration of her friends increased every day. The little children, whose musical education she had now begun, had already learned to love her; and when she was transformed from a friend to a teacher they loved her none the less. Zillah's capacity for teaching was so remarkable that it surprised herself, and she began to think that she had not been understood in the old days. But then, in the old days, she was a petted and spoiled child, and would never try to work until the last year of her life with the Earl, after he had extorted from her a promise to do differently.

Obed Chute saw her success in her new position with undisguised satisfaction. But now that she had become a governess he was not at all inclined to relax his exertions in her behalf. She was of too much importance, he said, to waste her life and injure her health in constant drudgery, and so he determined that she should not suffer for want of recreation. In Naples there need never be any lack of that. The city itself, with its noisy, laughing, jovial population, seems to the English eye as though it was keeping one perpetual holiday. The Strada Toledo looks to the sober northerner as though a constant carnival were going on. Naples has itself to offer to the visitor, with its never-ending gayety and its many-sided life—its brilliant cafés, its lively theatres, its gay pantomimes, its buffooneries, its macaroni, its lazaroni, and its innumerable festivities. Naples has also a cluster of attractions all around it, which keep their freshness longer than those of any other city. Among these Obed Chute continued to take Zillah. To him it was the best happiness that he could desire when he had succeeded in making the time pass pleasantly for her. To see her face flush up with that innocent girlish enthusiasm, and to hear her merry laugh, which was still childlike in its freshness and abandon, was something so pleasant that he would chuckle over it to himself all the evening afterward.

So, as before, they drove about the environs or sailed over the bay. Very little did Obed Chute know about that historic past which lived and breathed amidst all these scenes through which he wandered. No student of history was he. To him the cave of Polyphemus brought no recollections; the isle of Capri was a simple isle of the sea, and nothing more; Misenum could not give to his imagination the vanished Roman navies; Puzzuoli could not show the traces of Saint Paul; and there was nothing which could make known to him the mighty footprints of the heroes of the past, from the time of the men of Osca, and Cumæ, and the builders of Pæstum's Titan temples, down through all the periods of Roman luxury, and through all gradations of men from Cicero to Nero, and down farther to the last, and not the least of all, Belisarius. The past was shut out, but it did not interfere with his simple-hearted enjoyment. The present was sufficient for him. He had no conception of art; and the proudest cathedrals of Naples, or the noblest sculptures of her museums, or the most radiant pictures, never awakened any emotion within him. Art was dumb to him; but then there remained something greater than art, and that was nature. Nature showed him here her rarest and divinest beauty; and if in the presence of such beauty as that—beauty which glowed in immortal lineaments wherever he turned his eyes—if before this he slighted the lesser beauties of

"ZILLAH'S CAPACITY FOR TEACHING SURPRISED HERSELF."

art, he might be sneered at by the mere dilettante, but the emotions of his own soul were none the less true and noble.

One day they had arranged for a sail to Capri. Miss Chute could not go, and Zillah went with Obed Chute alone. She had frequently done so before. It was a glorious day. Most days in Naples are glorious. The Neapolitan boatmen sang songs all the way—songs older, perhaps, than the time of Massaniello—songs which may have come down from Norman, or even from Roman days. There was one lively air which amused Zillah—

"How happy is the fisher's life,
Eccomi Eccola,
The fisher and his faithful wife,
Eccola!"

It was a lively, ringing refrain, and the words had in them that sentiment of domestic life which is not usually found in Continental songs. The sea glittered around them. The boat danced lightly over the waves. The gleaming atmosphere showed all the scenery with startling distinctness. (Where is there an atmosphere like that of Naples?) The sky was of an intense blue, and the deep azure of the sea rivaled the color of the sky that bent above it. The breeze that swept over the sea brought on its wings life and health and joy. All around there flashed before them the white sails of countless boats that sped in every direction over the surface of the waters. They landed in Capri, and walked about the island. They visited the cave, and strolled along the shore. At length they sat down on a rock, and looked over the waters toward the city. Before them spread out the sea, bounded by the white gleaming outline of Naples, which extended far along the shore; on the left was Ischia; and on the right Vesuvius towered on high, with its smoke cloud hovering over it, and streaming far along through the air. Never before had the Bay of Naples seemed so lovely. Zillah lost herself in her deep admiration. Obed Chute also sat in profound silence. Usually he talked; now, however, he said nothing. Zillah thought that he, like herself, was lost in the beauty of this matchless scene.

At length the long silence was broken by Obed Chute.

"My child," said he, "for the last few weeks I have been thinking much of you. You have wound yourself around my heart. I want to say something to you now which will surprise you, perhaps—and, indeed, I do not know how you will

take it. But in whatever way you take it, do not be afraid to tell me exactly how you feel. Whatever you may say, I insist on being your friend. You once called me your 'best friend.' I will never do any thing to lose that title."

Zillah looked up in wonder. She was bewildered. Her brain whirled, and all presence of mind left her. She suspected what was coming, but it seemed too extraordinary, and she could scarcely believe it. She looked at him thus bewildered and confused, and Obed went calmly on.

"My child," said he, "you are so noble and so tender that it is not surprising that you have fixed yourself fast in my old heart. You are very dear and very precious to me. I do not know how I could bear to have you leave me. I hope to have you near me while I live, in some way or other. How shall it be? Will you be a daughter to me—or will you be a wife?"

Obed Chute paused. He did not look at her as he said this. He did not see the crimson flush that shot like lightning over that white and beautiful face. He looked away over the sea.

But a deep groan from Zillah aroused him. He started and turned.

Her face was upturned to his with an expression of agony. She clasped his arms with a convulsive grasp, and seemed to gasp for breath.

"Oh God!" she cried. "Is this so? I must tell you this much, then—I will divulge my secret. Oh, my friend—I am married!"

CHAPTER LII.

A BETTER UNDERSTANDING.

For a long time not a word was spoken. Obed sat thunder-struck by this intelligence. He looked at her in wonder, as her fair girlish face was turned toward him, not knowing how to receive this unparalleled communication.

"Oh, my friend," said Zillah, "have I ever in any way shown that I could have expected this? Yes, I am married—and it is about my marriage that the secret of my life has grown. Forgive me if I can not tell you more."

"Forgive you? What are you saying, my child?" said Obed Chute, tenderly. "I am the one who must be forgiven. I have disturbed and troubled you, when I was only seeking to secure your happiness."

By this time Obed had recovered from his surprise, and began to contemplate the present state of affairs in their new aspect. It certainly was strange that this young girl should be a married woman, but so it was; and what then? "What then?" was the question which suggested itself to Zillah also. Would it make any difference—or rather would it not make all the difference in the world? Hitherto she had felt unembarrassed in his society, but hereafter all would be different. Never again could she feel the same degree of ease as before in his presence. Would he not hereafter seem to her and to himself as a rejected lover?

But these thoughts soon were diverted into another channel by Obed Chute himself.

"So you are married?" said he, solemnly.

"Yes," faltered Zillah.

"Well, my child," said Obed, with that same tenderness in his voice, which was now so familiar to her, "whether it is for good or evil I do not seek to know. I only say this, that if there is any thing which I could do to secure your happiness, you could not find any one who would do more for you than Obed Chute."

"Oh, my friend!"

"Just now," said Obed Chute, "I asked you to be my wife. Do not avoid the subject, my child. I am not ashamed of having made that proposal. It was for your happiness, as I thought, as well as for my own. I loved you; and I thought that, perhaps, if you were my wife, I could make you happier than you now are. But since it is not to be, what then? Why, I love you none the less; and if you can not be my wife, you shall be my daughter. Do not look upon me as a passionate youth. My love is deep and tender and self-sacrificing. I think, perhaps, it is much more the love of a father than that of a husband, and that it is just as well that there are obstacles in the way of my proposal. Do not look so sad, my little child," continued Obed Chute, with increased tenderness. "Why should you? I am your friend, and you must love me as much as you can—like a daughter. Will you be a daughter to me? Will you trust me, my child, and brighten my life as you have been doing?"

He held out his hand.

Zillah took it, and burst into tears. A thousand contending emotions were in her heart and agitating her.

"Oh, my friend and benefactor!" said she; "how can I help giving you my love and my gratitude? You have been to me a father and a friend—"

"Say no more," said Obed, interrupting her. "It is enough. We will forget that this conversation has taken place. And as for myself, I will cherish your secret, my child. It is as safe with me as it would be with yourself only."

Now as he spoke, with his frank, generous face turned toward her, and the glow of affection in his eyes, Zillah felt as though it would be better to give him her full confidence and tell him all. In telling him that she was married she had made a beginning. Why should she not tell every thing, and make known the secret of her life? It would be safe with him. It would be a fair return for his generous affection. Above all, it would be frank and honest. He would then know all about her, and there would be nothing more to conceal.

Thus she thought; but still she shrank from such a confession and such a confidence. It would involve a disclosure of all the most solemn and sacred memories of her life. It would do violence to her most delicate instincts. Could she do this? It was impossible. Not unless Obed Chute insisted on knowing every thing could she venture to lay bare her past life, and make known the secrets of her heart. And she well knew that such a thing would never be required of her, at least by this generous friend. Indeed, she knew well that he would be most likely to refuse her confidence, even if she were to offer it on such an occasion as this.

"I feel," said Zillah at length, as these thoughts oppressed her, "that I am in a false position. You have been so generous to me that you have a right to know all about me. I ought to let you know my true name, and make you acquainted with the story of my life."

"You ought to do nothing of the sort," said Obed Chute. "There are some things which can not be breathed to any human being. Do you form so low an estimate of me, my dear child, as to think that I would wish to have your confidence unless it was absolutely necessary, and for your own good? No. You do not understand me. The affection which I have for you, which you call generosity, gives me no such claim, and it gives me no desire to tear open those wounds which your poor heart must feel so keenly. Nothing can prevent my loving you. I tell you you are my daughter. I accept you as you are. I wish to know nothing. I know enough of you from my knowledge of your character. I only know this, that you have suffered; and I should like very much to be able to console you or make you happier."

"You have done very much for me," said Zillah, looking at him with deep emotion.

"Nothing, as far as I am concerned; but it is pleasant to me to know that any thing which I have done is grateful to you," said Obed, calmly and benignantly. "Keep your secret to yourself, my dear child. You came to me from the sea; and I only hope that you will continue with me as long as you can to brighten my life, and let me hear your voice and see your face. And that is a simple wish. Is it not, my child?"

"You are overwhelming me with your goodness," said Zillah, with another grateful glance.

She was most grateful for the way in which Obed had given up his idea of matrimony. Had he shown the excitement of a disappointed lover, then there would have been a dark future before her. She would have had to leave his family, among whom she had found a home. But Obed showed nothing of this kind. He himself said that, if he could not have her as a wife, he would be satisfied to have her as a daughter. And when he learned that she was married, he at once took up the paternal attitude, and the affection which he expressed was that tender yet calm feeling which might become a father. At the expression of such a feeling as this Zillah's generous and loving heart responded, and all her nature warmed beneath its genial influence. Yes, she would be to him as a daughter; she would show him all the gratitude and devotion of which she was capable. Under such circumstances as these her life could go on as it had before, and the interview of to-day would not cast the slightest shadow over the sunshine of the future. So she felt, and so she said.

Obed took pains to assure her over and over again how entirely he had sunk all considerations of himself in his regard for her, and that the idea of making her his wife was not more precious than that of making her his daughter.

"It was to have you near me," said he, "to make you happy, to give you a home which should be all yours; but this can be done in another and a better way, my child: so I am content, if you are."

Before they left the place Zillah gave him, in general terms, an outline of her secret, without mentioning names and places. She said that she was married when very young, that her father had died, that the man to whom she had been married disliked her, and she had not seen him for years; that once she had seen a letter which he had written to a friend, in which he alluded to her in such insulting language, and with such expressions of abhorrence, that she had gone into seclusion, and had determined to preserve that seclusion till she died. Hilda, she said, had accompanied her, and she had believed her to be faithful until the recent discovery of her treachery.

This much Zillah felt herself bound to tell Obed Chute. From this he could at once understand her situation, while at the same time it would be impossible for him to know who she was or who her friends were. That she would not tell to any human being.

All the sympathies of Obed Chute's nature were aroused as he listened to what Zillah told him. He was indignant that she should have been led through any motive into such a marriage. In his heart he blamed her friends, whoever they were, and especially her father. But most of all he blamed this unknown husband of hers, who, after consenting to a marriage, had chosen to insult and revile her. What he thought he did not choose to say, but to himself he registered a vow that, if he could ever find out this villain, he would avenge all Zillah's wrongs in his heart's blood, which vow brought to his heart a great peace and calm.

This day was an eventful one for Zillah, but the result was not what might at one time have been feared. After such an interchange of confidence there was an understanding between her and her friend, which deepened the true and sincere friendship that existed between them. Zillah's manner toward him became more confiding, more trustful—in short, more filial. He, too, insensibly took up the part of a parent or guardian; yet he was as solicitous about her welfare and happiness as in the days when he had thought of making her his wife.

CHAPTER LIII.

BEYOND HIS REACH.

"COME!"

This was the word which Hilda had addressed to Gualtier in front of the Hôtel Gibbon at Lausanne, and, saying this, she tottered toward the door, supported by Gretchen. That stout German maid upheld her in her strong arms, as a mother might hold up a child as it learns to walk, ere yet its unsteady feet have found out the way to plant themselves. Gualtier had not yet got over the shock of such a surprise, but he saw her weakness, and was sufficiently himself to offer his arm to assist his mistress. But Hilda did not seem to see it. At any rate she did not accept the offer. Her only aim was to get into the hotel, and the assistance of Gretchen was quite enough for her.

Although Gretchen thus supported her, still even the slight exertion which she made, even the motion of her limbs which was required of her, though they scarcely felt her weight, was too much for her in her weakness and prostration. She panted for breath in her utter exhaustion, and at length, on reaching the hall, she stood for a few moments at the foot of the stairway, as though struggling to regain her breath, and then suddenly fainted away in the arms of Gretchen.

At this the stout maid took her in her arms,

and carried her up stairs, while Gualtier led the way to the suite of apartments occupied by Lord Chetwynde. Here Hilda was placed on a sofa, and after a time came to herself.

She then told Gretchen to retire. The maid obeyed, and Hilda and Gualtier were left alone. The latter stood regarding her, with his pale face full of deep anxiety and apprehension, dreading he knew not what, and seeing in her something which seemed to take her beyond the reach of that coercion which he had once successfully applied to her.

"Tell me," cried Hilda, the instant that Gretchen had closed the door after her, looking around at the same time with something of her old sharp vigilance—"tell me, it is not too late yet to save him?"

"To *save* him!" repeated Gualtier.

"Yes. That is what brought me here."

Gualtier looked at her with eager scrutiny, seeking to fathom her full meaning. Suspecting the truth, he was yet unwilling to believe it.

His answer was given in slow, deliberate tones.

"No," said he, "it is—not—yet—too—late—to—save him—if that is really what you wish."

"That is what I have come for," said Hilda; "I am going to take my place at his bedside, to undo the past, and bring him back to life. That is my purpose. Do you hear?" she said, while her white lips quivered with excitement, and her shattered frame trembled with the intensity of her emotion.

"I hear, my lady," said Gualtier, with his old respect, but with a dull light in his gray eyes, and a cold and stern intonation which told of the anger which was rising within him.

Once he had shaken off her authority, and had spoken to her with the tone of a master. It was not probable that he would recede now from the stand which he had then taken. But, on the other hand, Hilda did not now seem like one over whom his old menaces would have any effect. There was in her, besides her suffering, an air of reckless self-sacrifice, which made it seem as if no threats of his could again affect her.

"You hear?" said she, with feverish impatience. "Have you nothing more to say?"

"No, nothing. It is for you to speak," said Gualtier, gruffly. "You began."

"He must be saved," said Hilda; "and I must save him; and you must help me."

Gualtier turned away his head, while a dark frown came over his face. The gesture excited Hilda still more.

"What!" she hissed, springing to her feet, and grasping his arm, "do you hesitate? Do you refuse to assist me?"

"Our relations are changed," said Gualtier, slowly, turning round as he spoke. "This thing I will not do. I have begun my work."

As he turned he encountered the eyes of Hilda, which were fixed on him—stern, wrathful, menacing.

"You have begun it!" she repeated. "It was my work—not yours. I order you to desist, and you must obey. You can not do any thing else. To go on is impossible, if I stand between you and him. Only one thing is left for you, and that is to obey me, and assist me as before."

"Obey you!" said Gualtier, with a cold and almost ferocious glance. "The time for obedience I think is past. That much you ought to know. And what is it that you ask? What? To thrust from me the dearest hope of my life, and just as it was reaching fruition."

Hilda's eyes were fastened on Gualtier as he said these words. The scorn with which he disowned any obedience, the confidence with which he spoke of that renunciation of his former subordination, were but ill in accordance with those words with which he expressed his "dearest hope."

"Dearest hope!" said Hilda—"fruition! If you knew any thing, you would know that the time for that is rapidly passing, and only your prompt obedience and assistance will benefit you now."

"Pardon me," said Gualtier, hastily; "I forgot myself in my excitement. But you ask impossible things. I can not help you here. The obstacle between you and me was nearly removed—and you ask me to replace it."

"Obstacle!" said Hilda, in scorn. "Is it thus that you mention *him*?" In her weakness her wrath and indignation burst forth. "That man whom you call an obstacle is one for whose sake I have dragged myself over hundreds of miles; for whom I am now ready to lay down my life. Do not wonder. Do not question me. Call it passion—madness—any thing—but do not attempt to thwart me. Speak now. Will you help me or not?"

"Help you!" cried Gualtier, bitterly, "help you! to what? to do that which will destroy my last hope—and after I have extorted from you your promise! Ask me any thing else."

"I want nothing else."

"You may yet want my aid."

"If you do not help me now, I shall never want you."

"You have needed me before, and will need me again."

"If *he* dies, I shall never need you again."

"If *he* dies, that is the very time when you will need me."

"No, I shall not—for if *he* dies I will die myself!" cried Hilda, in a burst of uncontrollable passion.

Gualtier started, and his heart sank within him. Long and earnestly he looked at her, but he saw that this was more than a fitful outburst of passion. Looking on her face with its stern and fixed resolve, with its intense meaning, he knew that what she had said was none other than her calm, set purpose. He saw it in every one of those faded lineaments, upon which such a change had been wrought in so short a time. He read it in the hollows round her eyes, in her sunken cheeks and her white, bloodless lips, in her thin, emaciated hands, which were now clenched in desperate resolve. From this he saw that there was no appeal. He learned how strong that passion must be which had thus overmastered her, and was consuming all the energies of her powerful nature. To this she was sacrificing the labor of years, and all the prospects which now lay before her; to this she gave up all her future life, with all its possibilities of wealth and honor and station. A coronet, a castle, a princely revenue, rank, wealth, and title, all lay before her within her grasp; yet now she turned her back upon them, and came to the bedside of the man whose death was necessary to her success, to save him from

death. She trampled her own interests in the dust; she threw to the winds the hard-won results of treachery and crime, and only that she might be near him who abhorred her, and whose first word on coming back to consciousness might be an imprecation. Beside this man who hated her, he who adored her was as nothing, and all his devotion and all his adoration were in one moment forgotten.

All these thoughts flashed through the mind of Gualtier as at that instant he comprehended the situation. And what was he to do? Could he associate himself with her in this new purpose? He could not. He might have refrained from the work of death at the outset, if she had bid him refrain, but now that he had begun it, it was not easy to give it up. She had set him to the task. It had been doubly sweet to him. First, it was a delight to his own vindictive nature; and secondly, he had flattered himself that this would be an offering well pleasing to the woman whom he adored. She had set him to this task, and when it was fully completed he might hope for an adequate reward. From the death of this man he had accustomed himself to look forward in anticipation of the highest happiness for himself. All his future grew bright from the darkness of this deed.

Now in one instant his dream was dispelled. The very one who had commanded him to do this now came in a kind of frenzy, with a face like that of death, bidding him to stay his hand. Deep, dark, and bitter was that disappointment, and all the more so from its utter suddenness. And because he could read in her face and in her words not only the change that had taken place, but also the cause of that change, the revulsion of feeling within himself became the more intolerable. His nature rose up in rebellion against this capricious being. How could he yield to her wishes here? He could not sway with every varying feeling of hers. He could not thus retire from his unfinished work, and give up his vengeance.

Indignant as he was, there was yet something in Hilda's countenance which stirred to its depths the deep passion of his soul. Her face had the expression of one who had made up her mind to die. To such a one what words could he say—what arguments could he use? For a time pity overmastered anger, and his answer was mild.

"You ask impossibilities," said he. "In no case can I help you. I will not even let you do what you propose."

Hilda looked at him with a cold glance of scorn. She seated herself once more.

"You will not let me!" she repeated.

"Certainly not. I shall go on with the work which I have begun. But I will see that you receive the best attention. You are excited now. Shall I tell the maid to come to you? You had better put an end to this interview; it is too much for you. You need rest."

Gualtier spoke quietly, and seemed really to feel some anxiety about her excitement. But he miscalculated utterly the nature of Hilda, and relied too much on the fact that he had once terrified her. These cool words threw into Hilda a vivid excitement of feeling, which for a time turned all her thoughts upon this man, who under such circumstances dared to resume that tone of impudent superiority which once before he had ventured to adopt. Her strength revived under such a stimulus, and for a time her bitter contempt and indignation stilled the deep sorrow and anxiety of her heart.

The voice with which she answered was no longer agitated or excited. It was cool, firm, and penetrating—a tone which reminded him of her old domineering manner.

"You are not asked to give up your work," said she. "It is done. You are dismissed."

"Dismissed!" said Gualtier, with a sneer. "You ought to know that I am not one who can be dismissed."

"I know that you can be, and that you are," said Hilda. "If you were capable of understanding me you would know this. But you, base and low-born hireling that you are, what can there be in common between one like you and one like *me*?"

"One thing," said Gualtier. "*Crime!*"

Hilda changed not a feature.

"What care I for that? It is over. I have passed into another life. Your coarse and vulgar threats avail nothing. This moment ends all communication between us forever. You may do what you like. All your threats are useless. Finally, you must go away at once."

"Go away?"

"Yes—at once—and forever. These rooms shall never see you again. *I* am here, and will stay here."

"You?"

"*I!*"

"You have no right here."

"I have."

"What right?"

"The right of *love*," said Hilda. "I come to save him!"

"You tried to kill him."

"That is passed. I will save him now."

"You are mad. You know that this is idle. You know that I am a determined and desperate man."

"Pooh! What is the determination or the desperation of one like you? I know well what you think. Once you were able to move me by your threats. That is passed. My resolve and my despair have placed me beyond your reach forever. Go—go away. Begone! Take your threats with you, and do your worst."

"You are mad—you are utterly mad," said Gualtier, confounded at the desperation of one whom he felt was so utterly in his power; one, too, who herself must have known this. "You have forgotten your past. Will you force me to remind you of it?"

"I have forgotten nothing," said Hilda; "but I care nothing for it."

"You must care for it. You will be forced to. Your future happens to depend on it."

"My future happens to be equally indifferent to me," said Hilda. "I have given up all my plans and hopes. I am beyond *your* reach, at any rate. You are powerless against me now."

Gualtier smiled.

"You speak lightly," said he, "of the past and the future. You are excited. If you think calmly about your position, you will see that you are now more in my power than ever; and you will see, also, that I am willing to use that power. Do not drive me to extremes."

"These are your old threats," said Hilda, with bitter contempt. "They are stale now."

"Stale!" repeated Gualtier. "There are things which can never be stale, and in such things you and I have been partners. Must I remind you of them?"

"It's not at all necessary. You had much better leave, and go back to England, or any where else."

These words stung Gualtier.

"I will recall them," he cried, in a low, fierce voice. "You have a convenient memory, and may succeed for a time in banishing your thoughts; but you have that on your soul which no efforts of yours can banish—things which must haunt you, cold-blooded as you are, even as they have haunted me—my God!—and haunt me yet."

"The state of your mind is of no concern to me. You had better obey my order, and go, so as not to add any more to your present apparent troubles."

"Your taunts are foolish," said Gualtier, savagely. "You are in my power. What if I use it?"

"Use it, then."

Gualtier made a gesture of despair.

"Do you know what it means?" he exclaimed.

"I suppose so."

"You do not—you can not. It means the downfall of all your hopes, your desires, your plans."

"I tell you I no longer care for things like those."

"You do not mean it—you can not. What! can you come down from being Lady Chetwynde to plain Hilda Krieff?"

"I have implied that, I believe," said Hilda, in the same tone. "Now you understand me. Go and pull me down as fast as you like."

"But," said Gualtier, more excitedly, "you do not know what you are saying. There is something more in store for you than mere humiliation—something worse than a change in station—something more terrible than ruin itself. You are a criminal. You know it. It is for this that you must give your account. And, remember, such crimes as yours are not common ones. Such victims as the Earl of Chetwynde and Zillah are not those whom one can sacrifice with impunity. It is such as these that will be traced back to you, and woe be to you when their blood is required at your hands! Can you face this prospect? Is this future so very indifferent to you? If you have nothing like remorse, are you also utterly destitute of fear?"

"Yes," said Hilda.

"I don't believe it," said Gualtier, rudely.

"That is because you think I have no alternative," said Hilda; "it is a mistake into which a base and cowardly nature might naturally fall."

"You have no alternative," said Gualtier. "It's impossible."

"I have," said Hilda, calmly.

"What?"

She whispered one word. It struck upon Gualtier's ear with fearful emphasis. It was the same word which she had once whispered to him in the park at Chetwynde. He recoiled with horror. A shudder passed through him. Hilda looked at him with calm and unchanged contempt.

"You dare not," he cried.

"Dare not?" she repeated. "What I dare administer to others I dare administer to myself. Go and perform your threats! Go with your information—go and let loose the authorities upon me! Go! Haste! Go—and see—see how quickly and how completely I will elude your grasp! As for you—your power is gone. You made one effort to exert it, and succeeded for the moment. But that has passed away. Never—never more can any threats of yours move me in the slightest. You know that I am resolute. Whether you believe that I am resolute about this matter or not makes no difference whatever to me. You are to go from this place at once—away from this place, and this town. That is my mandate. I am going to stay; and, since you have refused your assistance, I will do without it henceforth."

At these words Gualtier's face grew pale with rage and despair. He knew well Hilda's resolute character. That her last determination would be carried out he could scarcely doubt. Yet still his rage and his pride burst forth.

"Hilda Krieff," said he, for the first time discarding the pretense of respect and the false title by which he had so long addressed her, "do you not know who you are? What right have you to order me away, and stay here yourself—you with the Earl of Chetwynde—you, an unmarried girl? Answer me that, Hilda Krieff."

"What right?" said Hilda, as loftily as before, utterly unmoved by this utterance of her true name. "What right? The right of one who comes in love to save the object of her love. That is all. By that right I dismiss you. I drive you away, and stand myself by his bedside."

"You are very bold and very reckless," said he, with his white face turned toward her, half in rage, half in despair. "You are flinging yourself into a position which it will be impossible for you to hold, and you are insulting and defying one who can at any moment have you thrust from the place. I, if I chose, could now, at this instant, have you arrested, and in this very room."

"You!" said Hilda, with a sneer.

"Yes, I," said Gualtier, emphatically. "I have but to lodge my information with the authorities against you, and before ten minutes you would be carried away from this place, and separated from that man forever. Yes, Hilda Krieff, I can do that, and you know it; and yet you dare to taunt me and insult me, and drive me on to do things of which I might afterward repent. God knows I do not wish to do any thing but what is in accordance with your will. At this moment I would still obey any of your commands but this one; yet you try me more than mortal nature can endure, and I warn you that I will not bear it."

Hilda laughed.

Since this interview had commenced, instead of growing weaker, she had seemed rather to grow stronger. It was as though the excitement had been a stimulus, and had roused her to a new life. It had torn her thoughts suddenly and violently away from the things over which she had long brooded. Pride had been stirred up, and had repaired the ravages of love. At this last threat of Gualtier's she laughed.

"Poor creature!" she said. "And do you really think you can do any thing here? Your only place where you have any chance is in England, and then only by long and careful preparation. What could you do here in Lausanne?"

"I could have you flung in prison, and separated from him forever," said Gualtier, fiercely.

"You! you! And pray do you know who you are? Lord Chetwynde's valet! And who would take your word against Lord Chetwynde's wife?"

"That you are not."

"I am," said Hilda, firmly.

"My God! what do you mean?"

"I mean that I will stand up for my rights, and crush you into dust if you dare to enter into any frantic attempt against me here. You! why, what are you? You are Lord Chetwynde's scoundrel valet, who plotted against his master. Here in these rooms are the witnesses and the proofs of your crimes. You would bring an accusation against me, would you? You would inform the magistrates, perhaps, that I am not Lady Chetwynde—that I am an impostor—that my true name is Hilda Krieff—that I sent you on an errand to destroy your master? And pray have you thought how you could prove so wild and so improbable a fiction? Is there one thing that you could bring forward? Is there one living being who would sustain the charge? You know that there is nothing. Your vile slander would only recoil on your own head; and even if I did nothing—even if I treated you and your charge with silent contempt, you yourself would suffer, for the charge would excite such suspicion against you that you would undoubtedly be arrested.

"But, unfortunately for you, I would not be silent. I would come forward and tell the magistrates the whole truth. And I think, without self-conceit, there is enough in my appearance to win for me belief against the wild and frenzied fancies of a vulgar valet like you. Who would believe you when Lady Chetwynde came forward to tell her story, and to testify against you?

"I will tell you what Lady Chetwynde would have to say. She would tell how she once employed you in England; how you suffered some slight from her; how you were dismissed from her service. That then you went to London, and engaged yourself as valet to Lord Chetwynde, by whom you were not known; that, out of vengeance, you determined to ruin him. That Lady Chetwynde was anxious about her husband, and, hearing of his illness, followed him from place to place; that, owing to her intense anxiety, she broke down and nearly died; that she finally reached this place to find her villainous servant—the one whom she had dismissed—acting as her husband's valet. That she turned him off on the spot, whereupon he went to the authorities, and lodged some malicious and insane charges against her. But Lady Chetwynde would have more than this to say. She could show *certain vials*, which are no doubt in these rooms, to a doctor; and he could analyze their contents; and he could tell to the court what it was that had caused this mysterious disease to one who had always before been so healthy. And where do you think your charge would be in the face of Lady Chetwynde's story; in the face of the evidence of the vials and the doctor's analysis?"

Hilda paused and regarded Gualtier with cold contempt. Gualtier felt the terrible truth of all that she had said. He saw that here in Lausanne he had no chance. If he wished for vengeance he would have to delay it. And yet he did not wish for any vengeance on *her*. She had for the present eluded his grasp. In spite of his assertion of power over her—in spite of the coercion by which he had once extorted a promise from her—he was, after all, full of that same all-absorbing love and idolizing affection for her which had made him for so many years her willing slave and her blind tool. Now this sudden reassertion of her old supremacy, while it roused all his pride and stimulated his anger, excited also at the same time his admiration.

He spoke at length, and his tone was one of sadness.

"There is one other thing which is against me," said he; "my own heart. I can not do any thing against you."

"Your heart," said Hilda, "is very ready to hold you back when you see danger ahead."

Gualtier's pale face flushed.

"That's false," said he, "and you know it. Did my heart quail on that midnight sea when I was face to face with four ruffians and quelled their mutiny? You have already told me that it was a bold act."

"Well, at least you were armed, and they were not," said Hilda, with unchanged scorn.

"Enough," cried Gualtier, flushing a deeper and an angrier red. "I will argue with you no more. I will yield to you this time. I will leave the hotel and Lausanne. I will go to England. *He* shall be under your care, and you may do what you choose.

"But remember this," he continued, warningly. "I have your promise, given to me solemnly, and that promise I will yet claim. This man may recover; but, if he does, it will only be to despise you. His abhorrence will be the only reward that you can expect for your passion and your mad self-sacrifice. But even if it were possible for him to love you—yes, to love you as you love him—even then you could not have him. For I live; and while I live you could never be his. No, never. I have your promise, and I will come between you and him to sunder you forever and to cast you down. That much, at least, I can do, and you know it.

"And now farewell for the present. In any event you will need me again. I shall go to Chetwynde Castle, and wait there till I am wanted. The time will yet come, and that soon, when you will again wish my help. I will give you six months to try to carry out this wild plan of yours. At the end of that time I shall have something to do and to say; but I expect to be needed before then. If I am needed, you may rely upon me as before. I will forget every injury and be as devoted as ever."

With these ominous words Gualtier withdrew.

Hilda sank back in her chair exhausted, and sat for some time pressing her hand on her heart.

At length she summoned her strength, and, rising to her feet, she walked feebly through several rooms. Finally she reached one which was darkened. A bed was there, on which lay a figure. The figure was quite motionless; but her heart told her who this might be.

CHAPTER LIV.

NURSING THE SICK.

THE figure that lay upon the bed as Hilda entered the room sent a shock to her heart at the first glance. Very different was this one from that tall, strong man who but lately, in all the pride of manly beauty and matured strength, overawed her by his presence. What was he now? Where now was all that virile force, and strong, resistless nature, whose overmastering power she had experienced? Alas! but little of it could be seen in this wasted and emaciated figure that now lay before her, seemingly at the last verge of life. His features had grown thin and attenuated, his lips were drawn tight over his teeth, his face had the stamp of something like death upon it. He was sleeping fitfully, but his eyes were only half closed. His thin, bony hands moved restlessly about, and his lips muttered inarticulate words from time to time. Hilda placed her hand on his forehead. It was cold and damp. The cold sent a chill through every nerve. She bent down low over him. She devoured him with her eyes. That face, worn away by the progress of disease, that now lay unconscious, and without a ray of intelligence beneath her, was yet to her the best thing in all the world, and the one for which she would willingly give up the world. She stooped low down. She pressed her lips to his cold forehead. An instant she hesitated, and then she pressed her lips this time to the white lips that were before her. The long, passionate kiss did not wake the slumberer. He knew not that over him was bending one who had once sent him to death, but who now would give her own life to bring him back from that death to which she had sent him.

Such is the change which can be worked in the basest nature by the power of almighty love. Here it was made manifest. These lips had once given the kiss of Judas. On this face of hers the Earl of Chetwynde had gazed in horror; and these hands of hers, that now touched tremblingly the brow of the sick man, had once wrought out on him that which would never be made known. But the lips which once gave the kiss of Judas now gave that kiss which was the outpouring of the devotion of all her soul, and these hands were ready to deal death to herself to rescue him from evil. She twined her arms around his neck, and gazed at him as though her longing eyes would devour every lineament of his features. Again and again she pressed her lips to his, as though she would thus force upon him life and health and strength. But the sick man lay unconscious in her arms, all unheeding that full tide of passionate love which was surging and swelling within her bosom.

At last footsteps aroused her. A woman entered. She walked to the bedside and looked with tender sympathy at Hilda. She had heard from Gretchen that this was Lady Chetwynde, who had come to nurse her husband.

"Are you the nurse?" asked Hilda, who divined at one glance the character of the newcomer.

"Yes, my lady."

"Well, I am to be the nurse after this, but I should like you to remain. You can wait in one of the ante-rooms."

"Forgive me, my lady, if I say that you yourself are in need of a nurse. You will not be able to endure this fatigue. You look overworn now. Will you not take some rest?"

"No," said Hilda, sharply and decisively.

"My lady," said the nurse, "I will watch while you are resting."

"I shall not leave the room."

"Then, my lady, I will spread a mattress on the sofa, and you may lie down."

"No, I am best here by his side. Here I can get the only rest and the only strength that I want. I must be near enough to touch his hand and to see his face. Here I will stay."

"But, my lady, you will break down utterly."

"No, I shall not break down. I shall be strong enough to watch him until he is either better or worse. If he gets better, he will bring me back to health; if he gets worse, I will accompany him to the tomb."

Hilda spoke desperately. Her old self-control, her reticence, and calm had departed. The nurse looked at her with a face full of sympathy, and said not a word. The sight of this young and beautiful wife, herself so weak, so wan, and yet so devoted, so young and beautiful, yet so wasted and emaciated, whose only desire was to live or die by the side of her husband, roused all the feelings of her heart. To some Hilda's conduct would have been unintelligible; but this honest Swiss nurse was kind-hearted and sentimental, and the fervid devotion and utter self-abnegation of Hilda brought tears to her eyes.

"Ah, my lady," said she, "I see I shall soon have two to nurse."

"Well, if you have, it will not be for long," said Hilda.

The nurse sighed and was silent.

"May I remain, my lady, or shall I go?" she asked.

"You may go just now. See how my maid is doing, and if she wants any directions."

The nurse retired, and Hilda was again alone with the sick man. She sat on the bedside leaning over him, and twined her arms about him. There, as he lay, in his weakness and senselessness, she saw her own work. It was she, and no other, who had doomed him to this. Too well had her agent carried out the fatal commission which she had given. As his valet he had had constant access to the person of Lord Chetwynde, and had used his opportunities well. She understood perfectly how it was that such a thing as this had been brought about. She knew every part of the dread process, and had read enough to know the inevitable results.

And now—would he live or die? Life was low. Would it ever rally again? Had she come in time to save him, or was it all too late? The reproaches which she hurled against herself were now overwhelming her, and these reproaches alternated with feelings of intense tenderness. She was weak from her own recent illness, from the unwonted fatigue which she had endured, and from the excitement of that recent interview with Gauntier. Thus torn and tossed and distracted by a thousand contending emotions, Hilda sat there until at length weakness and fatigue overpowered her. It seemed to her that a change was coming over the face of the sick man. Suddenly he moved, and in such a way that his face was turned full toward her as he lay on his side.

At that moment i
had come—that a
his stamp there,
hope. The horro
came her. She f
When at length
Hilda senseless,
still under the h
called Gretchen,
sofa, where they l
She lay long unco
ered. Her first
ment, but finally
situation.
Now at length
wasting precious
tions and idle self
to save, that safet
hurriedly drew fr
it. It was the sa
the London drug
tasted it. After
solicitations of th
tered toward the
ported by her att
self on the bedsid
tried with a tremb

"NO; I AM BEST HERE BY HIS SIDE."

At that moment it seemed to her that the worst had come—that at last death himself had placed his stamp there, and that there was now no more hope. The horror of this fancy altogether overcame her. She fell forward and sank down.

When at length the nurse returned she found Hilda senseless, lying on the bed, with her arm still under the head of Lord Chetwynde. She called Gretchen, and the two made a bed on the sofa, where they lifted Hilda with tenderest care. She lay long unconscious, but at last she recovered. Her first thoughts were full of bewilderment, but finally she comprehended the whole situation.

Now at length she found that she had been wasting precious moments upon useless reflections and idle self-reproaches. If she had come to save, that safety ought not to be delayed. She hurriedly drew from her pocket a vial and opened it. It was the same which she had obtained from the London druggist. She smelled it, and then tasted it. After this she rose up, in spite of the solicitations of the nurse and Gretchen, and tottered toward the bed with unsteady steps, supported by her attendants. Then she seated herself on the bedside, and, asking for a spoon, she tried with a trembling hand to pour out some of the mixture from the vial. Her hands shook so that she could not. In despair she allowed the nurse to administer it, while Gretchen supported her, seating herself behind her in such a way that Hilda could lean against her, and still see the face of the sick man. In this position she watched while the nurse put the liquid into Lord Chetwynde's mouth, and saw him swallow it.

"My lady, you must lie down, or you will never get over this," said the nurse, earnestly, and passing her arms around Hilda, she gently drew her back to the sofa, assisted by Gretchen. Hilda allowed herself to be moved back without a word. For the remainder of that day she watched, lying on her sofa, and gave directions about the regular administration of the medicine. At her request they drew the sofa close up to the bedside of Lord Chetwynde, and propped her up high with pillows. There she lay weakly, with her face turned toward him, and her hand clasping his.

Night came, and Hilda still watched. Fatigue and weakness were fast overpowering her. Against these she struggled bravely, and lay with her eyes fixed on Lord Chetwynde. In that sharp exercise of her senses, which were all aroused in

his behalf, she became at last aware of the fact that they were getting beyond her control. Before her eyes, as she gazed upon this man, there came other and different visions. She saw another sick-bed, in a different room from this, with another form stretched upon it—a form like this, yet unlike, for it was older—a form with venerable gray hairs, with white, emaciated face, and with eyes full of fear and entreaty. At that sight horror came over her. She tried to rouse herself from the fearful state into which she was drifting. She summoned up all that remained of her physical and mental energy. The struggle was severe. All things round her seemed to change incessantly into the semblances of other things; the phantoms of a dead past—a dead but not a forgotten past—crowded around her, and all the force of her will was unavailing to repel them. She shuddered as she discovered the full extent of her own weakness, and saw where she was drifting. For she was drifting helplessly into the realm of shadowy memories; into the place where the past holds its empire; surrounded by all those forms which time and circumstance have rendered dreadful; forms from which memory shrinks, at whose aspect the soul loses all its strength. Here they were before her; kept back so long, they now crowded upon her; they asserted themselves, they forced themselves before her in her weakness. Her brain reeled; the strong, active intellect, which in health had been so powerful, now, in her hour of weakness, failed her. She struggled against these horrors, but the struggle was unavailing, and at last she yielded—she failed—she sank down headlong and helplessly into the abyss of forgotten things, into the thick throng of forms and images from which for so long a time she had kept herself apart.

Now they came before her.

The room changed to the old room at Chetwynde Castle. There was the window looking out upon the park. There was the door opening into the hall. Zillah stood there, pale and fearful, bidding her good-night. There was the bed upon which lay the form of a venerable man, whose face was ever turned toward her with its expression of fear, and of piteous entreaty. "Don't leave me," he murmured to the phantom form of Zillah. "Don't leave me with her," and his thin finger pointed to herself. But Zillah, ignorant of all danger, promised to send Mrs. Hart. And Zillah walked out, standing at the door for a time to give her last look—the look which the phantom of this visibn now had. Then, with a momentary glance, the phantom figure of Zillah faded away, and only the prostrate figure of the Earl appeared before her, with the white face, and the venerable hair, and the imploring eyes.

Then she walked to the window and looked out; then she walked to the door and looked down the hall. Silence was every where. All were asleep. No eye beheld her. Then she returned. She saw the white face of the sick man, and the imploring eyes encountered hers. Again she walked to the window; then she went to his bedside.

She stooped down. His white face was beneath her, with the imploring eyes. She kissed him.

"Judas!"

That was the sound that she heard—the last sound—for soon in that abhorrent vision the form of the dead lay before her, and around it the household gathered; and Zillah sat there, with a face of agony, looking up to her and saying:

"I am the next victim!"

Then all things were forgotten, and innumerable forms and phantoms came confusedly together.

She was in delirium.

CHAPTER LV.

SETTING A TRAP.

Gualtier was true to his word. On the evening of the day when he had that interview with Hilda he left the hotel, and Lausanne also, and set out for England. On the way he had much to think of, and his thoughts were not at all pleasant. This frenzy of Hilda's had taken him by complete surprise, and her utter recklessness of life, or all the things most desirable in life, were things on which he had never counted. Her dark resolve also which she had announced to him, the coolness with which she listened to his menaces, and the stern way in which she turned on him with menaces of her own, showed him plainly that, for the present at least, she was beyond his reach, and nothing which he might do could in any way affect her. Only one thing gave him hope, and that was the utter madness and impossibility of her design. He did not know what might have passed between her and Lord Chetwynde before, but he conjectured that she had been treated with insult great enough to inspire her with a thirst for vengeance. He now hoped that Lord Chetwynde, if he did recover, would regard her as before. He was not a man to change; his mind had been deeply imbittered against the woman whom he believed his wife, and recovery of sense would not lessen that bitterness. So Gualtier thought, and tried to believe, yet in his thoughts he also considered the possibility of a reconciliation. And, if such a thing could take place, then his mind was fully made up what to do. He would trample out all feelings of tenderness, and sacrifice love to full and complete vengeance. That reconciliation should be made short-lived, and should end in utter ruin to Hilda, even if he himself descended into the same abyss with her.

Thoughts like these occupied his mind until he reached London. Then he drove to the Strand Hotel, and took two front-rooms on the second story looking out upon the street, commanding a view of the dense crowd that always went thronging by.

Here, on the evening of his arrival, his thoughts turned to his old lodging-house, and to those numerous articles of value which he had left there. He had once made up his mind to let them go, and never seek to regain possession of them. He was conscious that to do so would be to endanger his safety, and perhaps to put a watchful pursuer once more on his track. Yet there was something in the thought which was attractive. Those articles were of great intrinsic value, and some of them were precious souvenirs, of little worth to any one else, yet to him beyond

price. Would it not be worth while to make an effort at least to regain possession of them? If it could be done, it would represent so much money at the least, and that was a thing which it was needful for him to consider. And, in any case, those mementoes of the past were sufficiently valuable to call for some effort and some risk. The more he thought of this, the more resistless became the temptation to make this effort and run this risk.

And what danger was there? What was the risk, and what was there to fear? Only one person was in existence from whom any danger could possibly be apprehended. That one was Black Bill, who had tracked him to London, and afterward watched at his lodgings, and whom he had feared so much that for his sake, and for his alone, he had given up every thing. And now the question that arose was this, did Black Bill really require so much precaution, and so great a sacrifice? It was not likely that Black Bill could have given any information to the police; that would have been too dangerous to himself. Besides, if the police had heard of such a story, they would have given some sign. In England every thing is known, and the police are forced to work openly. Their detective system is a clumsy one compared with the vast system of secrecy carried on on the Continent. Had they found out any thing whatever about so important a case as this, some kind of notice or other would have appeared in the papers. Gualtier had never ceased to watch for some such notice, but had never found one. So, with such opinions about the English police, he naturally concluded that they knew nothing about him.

It was therefore Black Bill, and Black Bill only, against whom he had to guard. As for him it was indeed possible, he thought, that he was still watching, but hardly probable. He was not in a position to spend so many months in idle watching, nor was he able to employ a confederate. Still less was it possible for such a man to win the landlord over to his side, and thus get his assistance. The more he thought of these things the more useless did it seem to entertain any further fear, and the more irresistible did his desire become to regain possession of those articles, which to him were of so much value. Under such circumstances, he finally resolved to make an effort.

Yet, so cautious was he by nature, so wary and vigilant, and so accustomed to be on his guard, that in this case he determined to run no risk by any exposure of his person to observation. He therefore deliberated carefully about various modes by which he could apply to the landlord. At first he thought of a disguise; but finally rejected this idea, thinking that, if Black Bill were really watching, he would expect some kind of a disguise. At last he decided that it would be safest to find some kind of a messenger, and send him, after instructing him what to ask for and what to say.

With this resolve he took a walk out on the Strand on the following morning, looking carefully at the faces of the great multitude which thronged the street, and trying to find some one who might be suited to his purpose. In that crowd there were many who would have gladly undertaken his business if he had asked them, but Gualtier had made up his mind as to the kind of messenger which would be best suited to him, and was unwilling to take any other.

Among the multitude which London holds almost any type of man can be found, if one looks long enough. The one which Gualtier wished is a common kind there, and he did not have a long search. A street boy, sharp, quick-witted, nimble, cunning—that was what he wanted, and that was what he found, after regarding many different specimens of that tribe and rejecting them. The boy whom he selected was somewhat less ragged than his companions, with a demure face, which, however, to his scrutinizing eyes, did not conceal the precocious maturity of mind and fertility of resource which lay beneath. A few words sufficed to explain his wish, and the boy eagerly accepted the task. Gualtier then took him to a cheap clothing store, and had him dressed in clothes which gave him the appearance of being the son of some small tradesman. After this he took him to his room in the hotel, and carefully instructed him in the part that he was to perform. The boy's wits were quickened by London life; the promise of a handsome reward quickened them still more, and at length, after a final questioning, in which he did his part to satisfaction, Gualtier gave him the address of the lodging-house.

"I am going west," said he; "I will be back before eight o'clock. You must come at eight exactly."

"Yes 'r," said the boy.

"Very well. Now go." And the boy, with a bob of his head, took his departure.

The boy went off, and at length reached the place which Gualtier had indicated. He rang at the door.

A servant came.

"Is this Mr. Gillis's?"

"Yes."

"Is he in?"

"Do you want to see him?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Particular business."

"Come in," said the servant; and the boy entered the hall and waited. In a few moments Mr. Gillis made his appearance. He regarded the boy carefully from head to foot.

"Come into the parlor," said he, leading the way into a room on the right. The boy followed, and Mr. Gillis shut the door.

"Well," said he, seating himself, "what is it that you want of me?"

"My father," said the boy, "is a grocer in Blackwall. He got a letter this morning from a friend of his who stopped here some time back. He had to go to America of a sudden and left his things, and wants to get 'em."

"Ah!" said Mr. Gillis. "What is the name of the lodger?"

"Mr. Brown," said the boy.

"Brown?" said Mr. Gillis. "Yes, there was such a lodger, and things but I don't know about his things. You wait here a moment till I go and ask Mrs. Gillis."

Saying this Mr. Gillis left the room. After about fifteen or twenty minutes he returned.

"Well, my boy," said he, "there are some things of Mr. Brown's here yet, I believe; and you have come for them? Have you a wagon?"

"HE CAREFULLY INSTRUCTED HIM IN THE PART HE WAS TO PERFORM."

"No. I only come to see if they were here, and to get your bill."

"And your father is Mr. Brown's friend?"

"Yes 'r."

"And Mr. Brown wrote to him?"

"Yes 'r."

"Well, you know I wouldn't like to give up the things on an uncertainty. They are very valuable. I would require some order from your father."

"Yes 'r."

Mr. Gillis asked a number of questions of the boy, to which he responded without hesitation, and then left the room again, saying that he would go and make out Mr. Brown's bill.

He was gone a long time. The boy amused himself by staring at the things in the room, at the ornaments, and pictures, and began to think that Mr. Gillis was never coming back, when at last footsteps were heard in the hall, the door opened, and Mr. Gillis entered, followed by two other men. One of these men had the face of a prize-fighter, or a ticket-of-leave man, with abundance of black hair and beard; his eyes were black and piercing, and his face was the same which has already been described as the face of Black Bill. But he was respectably dressed in black, he wore a beaver hat, and had lost something of his desperate air. The fact is, the police had taken Black Bill into their employ, and he was doing very well in his new occupation. The other was a sharp, wiry man, with a cunning face and a restless, fidgety manner. Both he and Black Bill looked carefully at the boy, and at length the sharp man spoke:

"You young rascal, do you know who I am?"

The boy started and looked aghast, terrified by such an address.

"No, Sir," he whimpered.

"Well, I'm Thomas S. Davis, detective. Do you understand what that means?"

"Yes 'r," said the boy, whose self-possession completely vanished at so formidable an announcement.

"Come now, young fellow," said Davis, "you've got to own up. Who are you?"

"I'm the son of Mr. B. F. Baker, grocer, Blackwall," said the boy, in a quick monotone.

"What street?"

"Queen Street, No. 17," said the boy.

"There ain't no such street."

"There is, 'cos he lives there."

"You young rascal, don't you suppose I know?"

"Well, I oughter know the place where I was bred and borned," said the boy.

"You're a young scamp. You needn't try to come it over me, you know. Why, I know Blackwall by heart. There isn't such a street there. Who sent you here?"

"Father."

"What for?"

"He got a letter from a man as used to stop here, askin' of him to get his things away."

"What is the name of the man?"

"Mr. Brown."

"Brown?"

"Yes 'r."

"Where is this Mr. Brown now?"

"In Liverpool."

"How did he get there?"

"He's just come back from America."

"See here, boy, you've got to own up," said Davis, suddenly. "I'm a detective. We belong to the police. So make a clean breast of it."

"Oh, Sir!" said the boy, in terror.

"Never mind 'Oh, Sir!' but own up," said Davis. "You've got to do it."

"I ain't got nothin' to own up. I'm sure I don't see why you're so hard on a poor cove as never did you no harm, nor nobody else."

And saying this the boy sniveled violently.

"I s'pose your dear mamma dressed you up in your Sunday clothes to come here?" said the detective, sneeringly.

"No, Sir," said the boy, "she didn't, 'cos she's dead, she is."

"Why didn't your father come himself?"

"'Cos he's too busy in his shop."

"Did you ever hear the name of this Brown before to-day?"

"No, Sir, never as I knows on."

"But you said he is a friend of your father's."

"So he is, Sir."

"And you never heard his name before?"

"Never, Sir, in my life, Sir—not this Brown."

"Is your father a religious man?"

"A what, Sir?"

"A religious man."

"I dunno, Sir."

"Does he go to church?"

"Oh, yes 'r, to meetin' on Sundays."

"What meeting?"

"Methodist, Sir."

"Where?"

"At No. 13 King Street," said the boy, without a moment's hesitation.

"You young jackass," said Davis. "No. 13 King Street, and all the numbers near it in Blackwall, are warehouses—what's the use of trying to humbug me?"

"Who's a-tryin' to humbug you?" whimpered the boy. "I don't remember the numbers. It's somewhere in King Street. I never go myself."

"You don't, don't you?"

"No, Sir."

"Now, see here, my boy," said Davis, sternly, "I know you. You can't come it over me. You've got into a nice mess, you have. You've got mixed in with a conspiracy, and the law's goin' to take hold of you at once unless you make a clean breast of it."

"Oh Lord!" cried the boy. "Stop that. What am I a-doin' of?"

"Nonsense, you young rascal! Listen to me now, and answer me. Do you know any thing about this Brown?"

"No, Sir. Father sent me."

"Well, then, let me tell you the police are after him. He's afraid to come here, and sent you. Don't you go and get mixed up with him. If you do, it 'll be worse for you. This Brown is the biggest villain in the kingdom, and any man that catches him 'll make his blessed fortune. We're on his tracks, and we're bound to follow him up. So tell me the truth—where is he now?"

"In Liverpool, Sir."

"You lie, you young devil! But, if you don't own up, it 'll be worse for you."

"How's a poor cove like me to know?" cried the boy. "I'm the son of a honest man, and I don't know any thing about your police."

"You'll know a blessed sight more about it before you're two hours older, if you go on humbuggin' us this fashion," said Davis, sternly.

"I ain't a-humbuggin'."

"You are—and I won't stand it. Come now. Brown is a *murderer*, do you hear? There's a reward offered for him. He's got to be caught. You've gone and mixed yourself up with this business, and you'll never get out of the scrape till you make a clean breast of it. That's all bosh about your father, you know."

"It ain't," said the boy, obstinately.

"Very well, then," said Davis, rising. "You've got to go with us. We'll go first to Blackwall, and, by the Lord, if we can't find your father, we'll take it out of you. You'll be put in the jug for ten years, and you'll have to tell after all. Come along now."

Davis grasped the boy's hand tightly and took him out of the room. A cab was at the door. Davis, Black Bill, and the boy got into it and drove along through the streets. The boy was silent and meditative. At last he spoke:

"It's no use goin' to Blackwall," said he, sulkily. "I ain't got no father."

"Didn't I know that?" said Davis. "You were lying, you know. Are you goin' to own up?"

"I s'pose I must."

"Of course you must."

"Well, will you let me go if I tell you all?"

"If you tell all we'll let you go sometime, but we will want you for a while yet."

"Well," said the boy, "I can't help it. I s'pose I've got to tell."

"Of course you have. And now, first, who sent you here?"

"Mr. Brown."

"Ah! Mr. Brown himself. Where did you see him?"

"In the Strand."

"Did you ever see him before?"

"No. He picked me up, and sent me here."

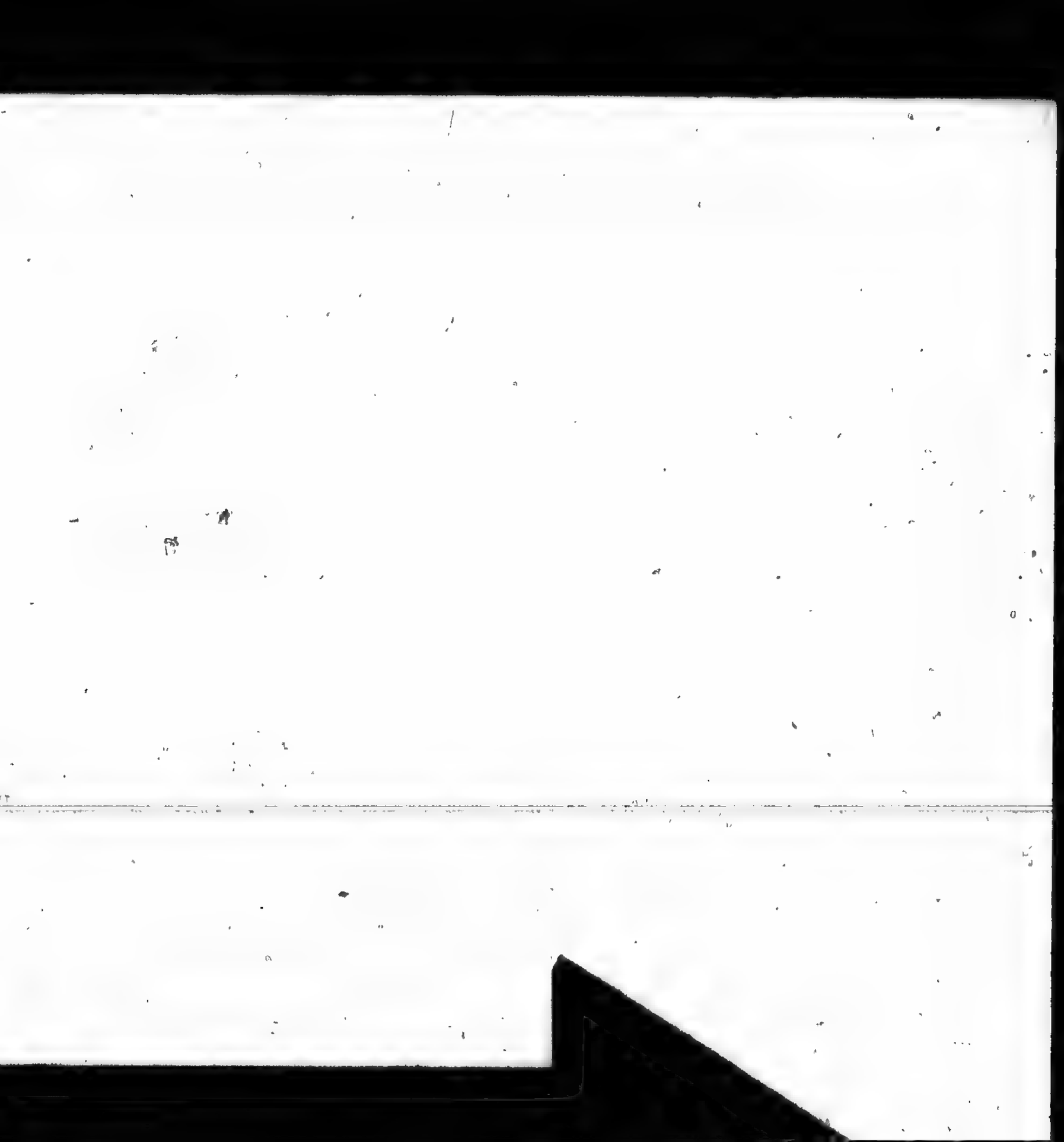
"Do you know where he is lodging?"

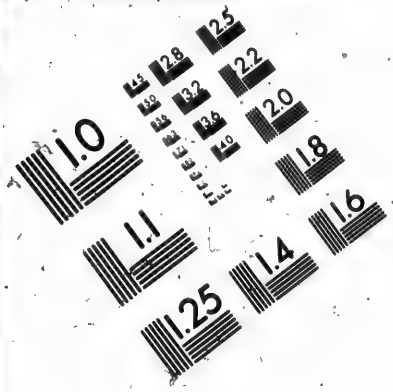
"Yes 'r."

"Where?"

"At the Strand Hotel. He took me into his room and told me what I was to do. I didn't know any thing about him or his business. I only went on an errand."

"Of course you did," said Davis, encouragingly. "And, if you tell the truth, you'll be all right; but if you try to humbug us," he added, sternly, "it 'll be the worse for you. Don't you





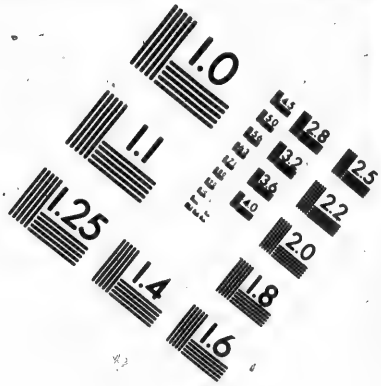
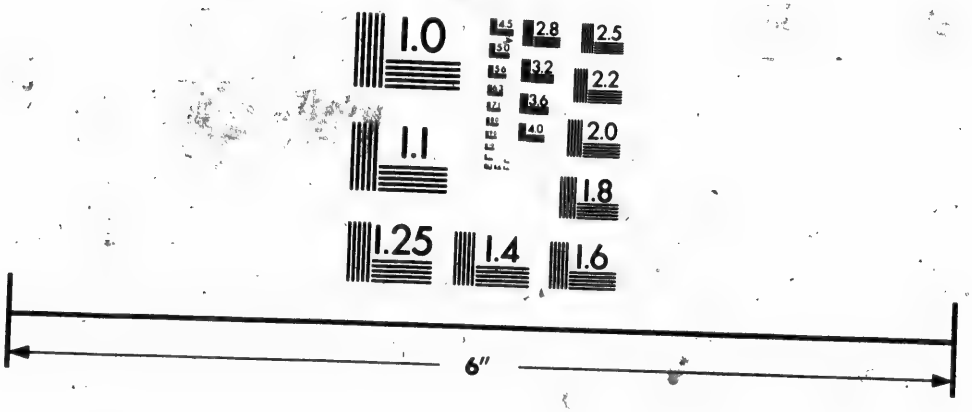
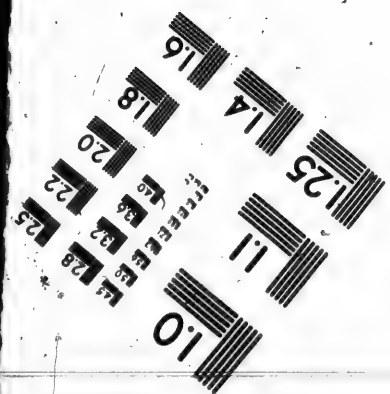
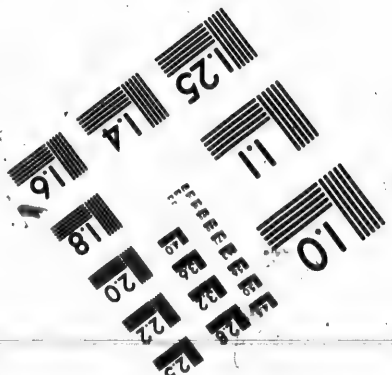


IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic
Sciences
Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

go and mix yourself up in a murder case. I don't want any thing more of you than for you to take us to this man's room. You were to see him again to-day—of course."

"Yes 'r."

"At what time?"

"Eight o'clock."

"Well—it's now four. You take us to his room, and we'll wait there."

The boy assented, and the cab drove off for the Strand Hotel.

The crowd in front of the hotel was so dense that it was some time before the cab could approach the entrance. At last they reached it and got out, Black Bill first, and then Davis, who still held the hand of the boy in a tight grasp, for fear that he might try to escape. They then worked their way through the crowd and entered the hotel. Davis said something to the clerk, and then they went up stairs, guided by the boy to Gualtier's room.

On entering it no one was there. Davis went into the adjoining bedroom, but found it empty. A carpet-bag was lying on the floor open. On examining it Davis found only a shaving-case and some changes of linen.

"We'll wait here," said Davis to Black Bill, as he re-entered the sitting-room. "He's out now. He'll be back at eight to see the boy. We've got him at last."

And then Black Bill spoke for the first time since the boy had seen him. A grim smile spread over his hard features.

"*Yes*," said he, "*we've got him at last!*"

CHAPTER LVI.

AT HIS BEDSIDE.

MEANWHILE Hilda's position was a hard one. Days passed on. The one who came to act as a nurse was herself stricken down, as she had already been twice before. They carried her away to another room, and Gretchen devoted herself to her care. Delirium came on, and all the past lived again in the fever-tossed mind of the sufferer. Unconscious of the real world in which she lay, she wandered in a world of phantoms, where the well-remembered forms of her past life surrounded her. Some deliriums are pleasant. All depend upon the ruling feelings of the one upon whom it is fixed. But here the ruling feeling of Hilda was not of that kind which could bring happiness. Her distracted mind wandered again through those scenes through which she had passed. Her life at Chetwynde, with all its later horrors and anxieties, came back before her. Again and again the vision of the dying Earl tormented her. What she said these foreign nurses heard, but understood not. They soothed her as best they might, and stood aghast at her sufferings, but were not able to do any thing to alleviate them. Most of all, however, her mind turned to the occurrences of the last few days and weeks. Again she was flying to the bedside of Lord Chetwynde; again the anguish of suspense devoured her, as she struggled against weakness to reach him; and again she felt overwhelmed by the shock of the first sight of the sick man, on whom she thought that she saw the stamp of death.

Meanwhile, as Hilda lay senseless, Lord Chetwynde hovered between life and death. The physician who had attended him came in on the morning after Hilda's arrival, and learned from the nurse that Lady Chetwynde had come suddenly, more dead than alive, and was herself struck down by fever. She had watched him all night from her own couch, until at last she had lost consciousness; but all her soul seemed bent on one thing, and that was that a certain medicine should be administered regularly to Lord Chetwynde. The doctor asked to see it. He smelled it and tasted it. An expression of horror passed over his face.

"My God!" he murmured. "I did not dare to suspect it! It must be so!"

"Where is Lord Chetwynde's valet?" he asked at length, after a thoughtful pause.

"I don't know, Sir," said the nurse.

"He always is here. I don't see him now."

"I haven't seen him since Lady Chetwynde's arrival."

"Did my lady see him?"

"I think she did, Sir."

"You don't know what passed?"

"No, Sir. Except this, that the valet hurried out, looking very pale, and has not been back since."

"Ah!" murmured the doctor to himself. "She has suspected something, and has come on. The valet has fled. Could this scoundrel have been the guilty one? Who else could it be? And he has fled. I never liked his looks. He had the face of a vampire."

The doctor took away some of the medicine with him, and at the same time he took with him one of the glasses which stood on a table near the bed. Some liquid remained in it. He took these away to subject them to chemical analysis. The result of that analysis served to confirm his suspicions. When he next came he directed the nurse to administer the antidote regularly, and left another mixture also.

Lord Chetwynde lay between life and death. At the last verge of mortal weakness, it would have needed but a slight thing to send him out of life forever. The only encouraging thing about him for many days was that he did not get worse. From this fact the doctor gained encouragement, though he still felt that the case was desperate. What suspicions he had formed he kept to himself.

Hilda, meanwhile, prostrated by this new attack, lay helpless, consumed by the fierce fever which rioted in all her veins. Fiercer and fiercer it grew, until she reached a critical point, where her condition was more perilous than that of Lord Chetwynde himself. But, in spite of all that she had suffered, her constitution was strong. Tender hands were at her service, kindly hearts sympathized with her, and the doctor, whose nature was stirred to its depths by pity and compassion for this beautiful stranger, who had thus fallen under the power of so mysterious a calamity, was unremitting in his attentions. The crisis of the fever came, and all that night, while it lasted, he staid with her, listening to her disconnected ravings, and understanding enough of them to perceive that her fancy was bringing back before her that journey from England to Lausanne, whose fatigues and anxieties had reduced her to this.

"My God!" cried the doctor, as some sharper lamentation burst from Hilda; "it would be better for Lord Chetwynde to die than to survive a wife like this!"

With the morning the crisis had passed, and, thanks to the doctor's care, the result was favorable. Hilda fell into a profound sleep, but the fever had left her, and the change was for the better.

When the doctor returned once more he found her awake, without fever, yet very feeble.

"My lady," said he, "you must be more careful of yourself for the sake of others. Lord Chetwynde is weak yet, and though his symptoms are favorable, yet he requires the greatest care."

"And do you have hope of him?" asked Hilda, eagerly. This was the one thought of her mind.

"I do have hope," said the doctor.

Hilda looked at him gratefully.

"At present," said the doctor, "you must not think or talk about any thing. Above all, you must restrain your feelings. It is your anxiety about Lord Chetwynde that is killing you. Save yourself for his sake."

"But may I not be carried into his room?" pleaded Hilda, in imploring tones.

"No; not to-day. Leave it to me. Believe me, my lady, I am anxious for his recovery and for yours. His recovery depends most of all upon you."

"Yes," said Hilda, in a faint voice; "far more than you know. There is a medicine which he must have."

"He has been taking it through all his sickness. I have not allowed that to be neglected," said the doctor.

"You have administered that?"

"Most certainly. It is his only hope."

"And do you understand what it is?"

"Of course. More—I understand what it involves. But do not fear. The danger has passed now. Do not let the anguish of such a discovery torment you. The danger has passed. He is weak now, and it is only his weakness that I have to contend with."

"You understand all, then?" repeated Hilda.

"Yes, all. But you must not speak about it now. Have confidence in me. The fact that I understand the disease will show you that I know how to deal with it. It baffled me before; but, as soon as I saw the medicine that you gave, I suspected and understood."

Hilda looked at him with awful inquiry.

"Be calm, my lady," said the doctor, in a sympathetic voice. "The worst is over. You have saved him."

"Say that again," said Hilda. "Have I, indeed, done any thing? Have I, indeed, saved him?"

"Most undoubtedly. Had it not been for you he would by this time have been in the other world," said the doctor, solemnly.

Hilda drew a deep sigh.

"That is some consolation," she said, in a mournful voice.

"You are too weak now to talk about this. Let me assure you again that you have every reason for hope. In a few days you may be removed to his apartment, where your love and devotion will soon meet with their reward."

"Tell me one thing," asked Hilda, earnestly. "Is Lord Chetwynde still delirious?"

"Yes—but only slightly so. It is more like a quiet sleep than any thing else; and, while he sleeps, the medicines are performing their appropriate effect upon him. Every thing is progressing favorably, and when he regains his senses he will be changed very much for the better. But now, my lady, you must think no more about it. Try and get some sleep. Be as calm in your mind as you can until to-morrow."

And with these words the doctor left.

On the following day he came again, but refused to speak on the subject of Lord Chetwynde's illness; he merely assured Hilda that he was still in an encouraging condition, and told her that she herself must keep calm, so that her recovery might be more rapid. For several days he forbade a renewal of the subject of conversation, with the intention, as he said, of sparing her every thing which might agitate her. Whether his precautions were wise or not may be doubted. Hilda sometimes troubled herself with fancies that the doctor might, perhaps, suspect all the truth; and though she succeeded in dismissing the idea as absurd, yet the trouble which she experienced from it was sufficient to agitate her in many ways. That fever-haunted land of delirium, out of which she had of late emerged, was still near enough to throw over her soul its dark and terrific shadows. It needed but a slight word from the doctor, or from any one else, to revive the accursed memories of an accursed past.

Several days passed away, and, in spite of her anxieties, she grew stronger. The longing which she felt to see Lord Chetwynde gave strength to her resolution to grow stronger; and, as once before, her ardent will seemed to sway the functions of the body. The doctor noticed this steady increase of strength one day, and promised her that on the following day she should be removed to Lord Chetwynde's room. She received this intelligence with the deepest gratitude.

"Lord Chetwynde's symptoms," continued the doctor, "are still favorable. He is no longer in delirium, but in a kind of gentle sleep, which is not so well defined as to be a stupor, but is yet stronger than an ordinary sleep. The medicine which is being administered has this effect. Perhaps you are aware of this?"

Hilda bowed.

"I was told so."

"Will you allow me to ask how it was that you obtained that particular medicine?" he asked. "Do you know what it involves?"

"Yes," said Hilda; "it is only too well known to me. The horror of this well-nigh killed me."

"How did you discover it—or how did you suspect it?"

Hilda answered, without a moment's hesitation:

"The suddenness of Lord Chetwynde's disease alarmed me. His valet wrote about his symptoms, and these terrified me still more. I hurried up to London and showed his report to a leading London physician. He looked shocked, asked me much about Lord Chetwynde's health, and gave me this medicine. I suspected from his manner what he feared, though he did not express his fear in words. In short, it seemed to me, from what he said, that this medicine was the *antidote to some poison*."

"You are right," said the doctor, solemnly; and then he remained silent for a long time.

"Do you suspect any one?" he asked at last.

Hilda sighed, and slowly said:

"Yes—I do."

"Who is the one?"

She paused. In that moment there were struggling within her thoughts which the doctor did not imagine. Should she be so base as to say what was in her mind, or should she not? That was the question. But rapidly she pushed aside all scruples, and in a low, stern voice she said:

"I suspect his valet."

"I thought so," said the doctor. "It could have been no other. But he must have had a motive. Can you imagine what motive there could have been?"

"I know it only too well," said Hilda, "though I did not think of this till it was too late. He was injured, or fancied himself injured, by Lord Chetwynde, and his motive was vengeance."

"And where is he now?" asked the doctor.

"He was thunder-struck by my appearance. He saw me nearly dead. He helped me up to his master's room. I charged him with his crime. He tried to falter out a denial. In vain. He was crushed beneath the overwhelming surprise. He hurried out abruptly, and has fled, I suppose forever, to some distant country. As for me, I forgot all about him, and fainted away by the bedside of my husband."

The doctor sighed heavily, and wiped a tear from his eye.

He had never known so sad a case as this.

CHAPTER LVII.

BACK TO LIFE.

On the next day, according to the doctor's promise, Hilda was taken into Lord Chetwynde's room. She was much stronger, and the new-found hope which she possessed of itself gave her increased vigor. She was carried in, and gently laid upon the sofa, which had been rolled up close by the bedside of Lord Chetwynde. Her first eager look showed her plainly that during the interval which had elapsed since she saw him last a great improvement had taken place. He was still unconscious, but his unconsciousness was that of a deep, sweet sleep, in which pleasant dreams had taken the place of delirious fancies. His face had lost its aspect of horror; there was no longer to be seen the stamp of death; the lips were full and red; the cheeks were no longer sunken; the dark circles had passed away from around the eyes; and the eyes themselves were now closed, as in sleep, instead of having that half-open appearance which before was so terrible and so deathlike. The chill damp had left his forehead. It was the face of one who is sleeping in pleasant slumber, instead of the face of one who was sinking rapidly into the realm where the sleep is eternal. All this Hilda saw at the first glance.

Her heart thrilled within her at the rapture of that discovery. The danger was over. The crisis had passed. Now, whether he lay there for a longer or a shorter period, his recovery at last was certain, as far as any thing human and mortal can be certain. Now her eyes, as they turned toward him, devoured him with all their old eagerness. Since she had seen him last she too had gone down to the gates of death, and she had come back again to take her place at his side. A strange joy and a peace that passed all understanding arose within her. She sent the nurse out of the room, and once more was alone with this man whom she loved. His face was turned toward her. She flung her arms about him in passionate eagerness, and, weak as she was, she bent down her lips to his. Unconscious he lay there, but the touch of his lips was now no longer like the touch of death.

She herself seemed to gain new strength from the sight of him as he thus lay in that manly beauty, which, banished for a time, had now returned again. She lay there on her sofa by his bedside, and held his hand in both of hers. She watched his face, and scanned every one of those noble lineaments, which now lay before her with something like their natural beauty. Hopes arose within her which brought new strength every moment. This was the life which she had saved. She forgot—did not choose to think—that she had doomed this life to death, and chose only to think that she had saved it from death. Thus she thought that, when Lord Chetwynde came forth out of his senselessness, she would be the first object that would meet his gaze, and he would know that he had been saved from death by her.

Here, then, she took up her place by his bedside, and saw how every day he grew better. Every day she her[illegible]ained her old strength, and could at leng[illegible]about the room, though she was still thi[illegible]eble. So the time passed; and in this room the one who first escaped from the jaws of death devoted herself to the task of assisting the other.

At last, one morning as the sun rose, Lord Chetwynde waked. He looked around the room. He lifted himself up on his elbow, and saw Hilda asleep on the sofa near his bed. He felt bewildered at this strange and unexpected figure. How did she get here? A dim remembrance of his long sickness suggested itself, and he had a vague idea of this figure attending upon him. But the ideas and remembrances were too shadowy to be grasped. The room he remembered partially, for this was the room in which he had sunk down into this last sickness at Lausanne. But the sleeping form on the sofa puzzled him. He had seen her last at Chetwynde. What was she doing here? He scanned her narrowly, thinking that he might be mistaken from some chance resemblance. A further examination, however, showed that he was correct. Yes, this was "his wife," yet how changed! Pale as death was that face; those features were thin and attenuated; the eyes were closed; the hair hung in black masses round the marble brow; an expression of sadness dwelt there; and in her fitful, broken slumber she sighed heavily. He looked at her long and steadfastly, and then sank wearily down upon the pillows, but still kept his eyes fixed upon this woman whom he saw there. How did she get here? What was she doing? What did it all mean? His remembrance could not supply him with facts which might answer this question. He could

not understand, and so he lay there in bewilderment, making feeble conjectures.

When Hilda opened her eyes the first thing that she saw was the face of Lord Chetwynde, whose eyes were fixed upon hers. She started and looked confused; but amidst her confusion an expression of joy darted across her face, which was evident and manifest to Lord Chetwynde. It was joy—eager, vivid, and intense; joy mingled with surprise; and her eyes at last rested on him with mute inquiry.

"Are you at last awake, my lord?" she murmured. "Are you out of your stupor?"

"I suppose so," said Lord Chetwynde. "But I do not understand this. I think I must be in Lausanne."

"Yes, you are in Lausanne, my lord, at the Hôtel Gibbon."

"The Hôtel Gibbon?" repeated Lord Chetwynde.

"Yes. Has your memory returned yet?"

"Only partially. I think I remember the journey here, but not very well. I hardly know where I came from. It must have been Baden." And he tried, but in vain, to recollect.

"You went from Frankfort to Baden, thence to Munich, and from Munich you came here."

"Yes," said Lord Chetwynde, slowly, as he began to recollect. "You are right. I begin to remember. But I have been ill, and I was ill at all these places. How long have I been here?"

"Five weeks."

"Good God!" cried Lord Chetwynde. "Is it possible? I must have been senseless all the time."

"Yes, this is the first time that you have come to your senses, my lord."

"I can scarcely remember any thing."

"Will you take your medicine now, my lord?"

"My medicine?"

"Yes," said Hilda, sitting up and taking a vial from the table; "the doctor ordered this to be given to you when you came out of your stupor."

"Where is my nurse?" asked Lord Chetwynde, abruptly, after a short but thoughtful silence.

"She is here, my lord. She wants to do your bidding. I am your nurse."

"You!"

"Yes, my lord. And now—do not speak, but take your medicine," said Hilda; and she poured out the mixture into a wine-glass and handed it to him.

He took it mechanically, and without a word, and then his head fell back, and he lay in silence for a long time, trying to recall his scattered thoughts. While he thus lay Hilda reclined on the sofa in perfect silence, motionless yet watchful, wondering what he was thinking about, and waiting for him to speak. She did not venture to interrupt him, although she perceived plainly that he was fully awake. She chose rather to leave him to his own thoughts, and to rest her fate upon the course which those thoughts might take. At last the silence was broken.

"I have been very ill?" he said at last, inquiringly.

"Yes, my lord, very ill. You have been down to the very borders of the grave."

"Yes, it must have been severe. I felt it coming on when I arrived in France," he murmured; "I remember now. But how did you hear about it?"

"Your valet telegraphed. He was frightened," said she, "and sent for me."

"Ah?" said Lord Chetwynde.

Hilda said nothing more on that subject. She would wait for another and a better time to tell him about that. The story of her devotion and of her suffering might yet be made known to him, but not now, when he had but partly recovered from his delirium.

Little more was said. In about an hour the nurse came in and sat near him. After some time the doctor came and congratulated him.

"Let me congratulate you, my lord," said he, "on your favorable condition. You owe your life to Lady Chetwynde, whose devotion has surpassed any thing that I have ever seen. She has done every thing—I have done nothing."

Lord Chetwynde made some commonplace compliment to his skill, and then asked him how long it would be before he might recover.

"That depends upon circumstances," said the doctor. "Rest and quiet are now the chief things which are needed. Do not be too impatient, my lord. Trust to these things, and rely upon the watchful care of Lady Chetwynde."

Lord Chetwynde said nothing. To Hilda, who had listened eagerly to this conversation, though she lay with closed eyes, his silence was perplexing. She could not tell whether he had softened toward her or not. A great fear arose within her that all her labor might have been in vain; but her matchless patience came to her rescue. She would wait—she would wait—she should at last gain the reward of her patient waiting.

The doctor, after fully attending to Lord Chetwynde, turned to her.

"You are weak, my lady," he said, with respectful sympathy, and full of pity for this devoted wife, who seemed to him only to live in her husband's presence. "You must take more care of yourself for *his* sake."

Hilda murmured some inarticulate words, and the doctor, after some further directions, withdrew.

Days passed on. Lord Chetwynde grew stronger every day. He saw Hilda as his chief attendant and most devoted nurse. He marked her pale face, her wan features, and the traces of suffering which still remained visible. He saw that all this had been done for his sake. Once, when she was absent taking some short rest, he had missed that instant attention which she had shown. With a sick man's impatience, he was troubled by the clumsiness of the hired nurse, and contrasted it with Hilda's instant readiness, and gentle touch, and soft voice of love.

At last, one day when Hilda was giving him some medicine, the vial dropped from her hands, and she sank down senseless by his bedside. She was carried away, and it was long before she came to herself.

"You must be careful of your lady, my lord," said the doctor, after he had seen her. "She has worn herself out for you, and will die some day by your bedside. Never have I seen such tenderness, and such fond devotion. She is the one who has saved you from death. She is now giving herself to death to insure your recovery. Watch over her. Do not let her sacrifice herself now. The time has come when she can spare

herself. Surely now, at last, there ought to be some peace and rest for this noble-hearted, this gentle, this loving, this devoted lady!"

And as all Hilda's devotion came before the mind of this tender-hearted physician he had to wipe away his tears, and turn away his head to conceal his emotion.

But his words sank deep into Lord Chetwynde's soul.

CHAPTER LVIII.

AN EXPLANATION.

TIME passed away, and Lord Chetwynde steadily recovered. Hilda also grew stronger, and something like her former vigor began to come back. She was able, in spite of her own weakness, to keep up her position as nurse; and when the doctor remonstrated she declared, piteously, that Lord Chetwynde's bedside was the place where she could gain the most benefit, and that to banish her from it would be to doom her to death. Lord Chetwynde was perplexed by this devotion, yet he would not have been human if he had not been affected by it.

As he recovered, the one question before his mind was, what should he do? The business with reference to the payment of that money which General Pomeroy had advanced was arranged before he left England. It was this which had occupied so much of his thoughts. All was arranged with his solicitors, and nothing remained for him to do. He had come to the Continent without any well-defined plans, merely in search after relaxation and distraction of mind. His eventful illness had brought other things before him, the most prominent thing among which was the extraordinary devotion of this woman, from whom he had been planning an eternal separation. He could not now accuse her of baseness. Whatever she might once have done she had surely atoned for during those hours when she stood by his bedside till she herself fell senseless, as he had seen her fall. It would have been but a common generosity which would have attributed good motives to her; and he could not help regarding her as full of devotion to himself.

Under these circumstances it became a very troublesome question to know what he was to do. Where was he to go? Should he loiter about the Continent as he once proposed? But then, he was under obligations to this devoted woman, who had done so much for him. What was he to do with regard to her? Could he send her home coldly, without a word of gratitude, or without one sign expressive of that thankfulness which any human being would feel under such circumstances? He could not do that. He must do or say something expressive of his sense of obligation. To do otherwise—to leave her abruptly—would be brutal. What could he do? He could not go back and live with her at Chetwynde. There was another, whose image filled all his heart, and the memory of whose looks and words made all other things unattractive. Had it not been for this, he must have yielded to pity, if not to love. Had it not been for this, he would have spoken tender words to that slender, white-faced woman who, with her imploring eyes, hovered about him, finding her highest happiness in being his slave, seeking her only recompense in some kindly look, or some encouraging word.

All the circumstances of his present position perplexed him. He knew not what to do; and, in this perplexity, his mind at length settled upon India as the shortest way of solving all difficulties. He could go back there again, and resume his old duties. Time might alleviate his grief over his father, and perhaps it might even mitigate the fervor of that fatal passion which had arisen in his heart for another who could never be his. There, at any rate, he would have sufficient occupation to take up his thoughts, and break up that constant tendency which he now had toward memories of the one whom he had lost. Amidst all his perplexity, therefore, the only thing left for him seemed to be India.

The time was approaching when he would be able to travel once more. Lausanne is the most beautiful place in the world, on the shore of the most beautiful of lakes, with the stupendous forms of the Jura Alps before it; but even so beautiful a place as this loses all its charms to the one who has been an invalid there, and the eye which has gazed upon the most sublime scenes in nature from a sick-bed loses all power of admiring their sublimity. And so Lord Chetwynde wearied of Lausanne, and the Lake of Geneva, and the Jura Alps, and, in his restlessness, he longed for other scenes which might be fresher, and not connected with such mournful associations. So he began to talk in a general way of going to Italy. This he mentioned to the doctor, who happened one day to ask him how he liked Lausanne. The question gave him an opportunity of saying that he looked upon it simply as a place where he had been ill, and that he was anxious to get off to Italy as soon as possible.

"Italy?" said the doctor.

"Yes."

"What part are you going to?"

"Oh, I don't know. Florence, I suppose—at first—and then other places. It don't much matter."

Hilda heard this in her vigilant watchfulness. It awakened fears within her that all her devotion had been in vain, and that he was planning to leave her. It seemed so. There was, therefore, no feeling of gratitude in his heart for all she had done. What she had done she now recalled in her bitterness—all the love, the devotion, the idolatry which she had lavished upon him would be as nothing. He had regained the control of his mind, and his first thought was to fly. The discovery of this indifference of his was terrible. She had trusted much to her devotion. She had thought that, in a nature like his, which was at once so pure, so high-minded, and so chivalrous, the spectacle of her noble self-sacrifice, combined with the discovery of her profound and all-absorbing love, would have awakened some response, if it were nothing stronger than mere gratitude. And why should it not be so? she thought. If she were ugly, or old, it would be different. But she was young; and, more than this, she was beautiful. True, her cheeks were not so rounded as they once were, her eyes were more hollow than they used to be, the pallor of her complexion was more intense than usual, and her lips were not so red; but what then? These were the signs and the marks which had been left upon her face by that death-

less devotion which she had shown toward him. If there was any change in her, he alone was the cause, and she had offered herself up to him. That pallor, that delicacy, that weakness, and that emaciation of frame were all the visible signs and tokens of her self-sacrificing love for him. These things, instead of repelling him, ought to attract him. Moreover, in spite of all these things, even with her wasted form, she could see that she was yet beautiful. Her dark eyes beamed more darkly than before from their hollow orbs, against the pallor of her face the ebon hair shone more lustrously, as it hung in dark voluminous masses downward, and the white face itself showed features that were faultlessly beautiful. Why should he turn away from so beautiful a woman, who had so fully proved her love and her devotion? She felt that after this conspicuous example of her love he could never again bring forward against her those old charges of deceit which he had once uttered. These, at least, were dead forever. All the letters which she had written from the very first, on to that last letter of which he had spoken so bitterly—all were now amply atoned for by the devotion of the last few weeks—a devotion that shrank not from suffering, nor even from death itself. Why then did he not reciprocate? Why was it that he held himself aloof in such a manner from her caresses? Why was it that when her voice grew tremulous from the deep love of her heart she found no response, but only saw a certain embarrassment in his looks? There must be some cause for this. If he had been heart-whole, she thought, he must have yielded. There is something in the way. There is some other love. Yes, that is it, she concluded; it is what I saw before. He loves another!

At length, one day, Lord Chetwynde began to speak to her more directly about his plans. He had made up his mind to make them known to her, and so he availed himself of the first opportunity.

"I must soon take my departure, Lady Chetwynde," said he, as he plunged at once into the midst of affairs. "I have made up my mind to go to Italy next week. As I intend to return to India I shall not go back to England again. All my business affairs are in the hands of my solicitors, and they will arrange all that I wish to be done."

By this Lord Chetwynde meant that his solicitors would arrange with Hilda those money-matters of which he had once spoken. He had too much consideration for her to make any direct allusion to them now, but wished, nevertheless, that she should understand his words in this way.

And in this way she did understand them. Her comprehension and apprehension were full and complete. By his tone and his look more than by his words she perceived that she had gained nothing by all her devotion. He had not meant to inflict actual suffering on her by these words. He had simply used them because he thought that it was best to acquaint her with his resolve in the most direct way, and, as he had tried for a long time to find some delicate way of doing this without success, he had at length, in desperation, adopted that which was most simple and plain. But to Hilda it was abrupt, and although she was not altogether unprepared, yet it came like a thunder-clap, and for a moment she sank down into the depths of despair.

Then she rallied. In spite of the consciousness of the truth of her position—a truth which was unknown to Lord Chetwynde—she felt as though she were the victim of ingratitude and injustice. What she had done entitled her, she thought, to something more than a cold dismissal. All her pride and her dignity arose in arms at this slight. She regarded him calmly for a few moments as she listened to his words. Then all the pent-up feelings of her heart burst forth irrepressibly.

"Lord Chetwynde," said she, in a low and mournful voice, "I once would not have said to you what I am now going to say. I had not the right to say it, nor if I had would my pride have permitted me. But now I feel that I have earned the right to say it; and as to my pride, that has long since been buried in the dust. Besides, your words render it necessary that I should speak, and no longer keep silence. We had one interview, in which you did all the speaking and I kept silence. We had another interview in which I made a vain attempt at conciliation. I now wish to speak merely to explain things as they have been, and as they are, so that hereafter you may feel this, at least, that I have been frank and open at last.

"Lord Chetwynde, you remember that old bond that bound me to you. What was I? A girl of ten—a child. Afterward I was held to that bond under circumstances that have been impressed upon my memory indelibly. My father in the last hour of his life, when delirium was upon him, forced me to carry it out. You were older than I. You were a grown man. I was a child of fourteen. Could you not have found some way of saving me? I was a child. You were a man. Could you not have obtained some one who was not a priest, so that such a mockery of a marriage might have remained a mockery, and not have become a reality? It would have been easy to do that. My father's last hours would then have been lightened all the same, while you and I would not have been joined in that irrevocable vow. I tell you, Lord Chetwynde, that, in the years that followed, this thought was often in my mind, and thus it was that I learned to lay upon you the chief blame of the events that resulted.

"You have spoken to me, Lord Chetwynde, in very plain language about the letters that I wrote. You found in them taunts and sneers which you considered intolerable. Tell me, my lord, if you had been in my position, would you have been more generous? Think how galling it is to a proud and sensitive nature to discover that it is tied up and bound beyond the possibility of release. Now this is far worse for a woman than it is for a man. A woman, unless she is an Asiatic and a slave, does not wish to be given up unasked. I found myself the property of one who was not only indifferent to me, but, as I plainly saw, averse to me. It was but natural that I should meet scorn with scorn. In your letters I could read between the lines, and in your cold and constrained answers to your father's remarks about me I saw how strong was your aversion. In your letters to me this was still more evident. What then? I was proud and impetuous, and what you merely hinted at I expressed openly and unmistakably.

You found fault with this. You may be right, but my conduct was after all natural.

"It is this, Lord Chetwynde, which will account for my last letter to you. Crushed by the loss of my only friend, I reflected upon the difference between you and him, and the thought brought a bitterness which is indescribable. Therefore I wrote as I did. My sorrow, instead of softening, imbittered me, and I poured forth all my bitterness in that letter. It stung you. You were maddened by it and outraged. You saw in it only the symptoms and the proofs of what you chose to call a 'bad mind and heart.' If you reflect a little you will see that your conclusions were not so strictly just as they might have been. You yourself, you will see, were not the immaculate being which you suppose yourself to be.

"I say to you now, Lord Chetwynde, that all this time, instead of hating you, I felt very differently toward you. I had for you a feeling of regard which, at least, may be called sisterly. Associating with your father as I did, possessing his love, and enjoying his confidence, it would have been strange if I had not sympathized with him somewhat in his affections. Your name was always on his lips. You were the one of whom he was always speaking. When I wished to make him happy, and such a wish was always in my heart, I found no way so sure and certain as when I spoke in praise of you. During those years when I was writing those letters which you think showed a 'bad mind and heart,' I was incessantly engaged in sounding your praises to your father. What he thought of me you know. If I had a 'bad mind and heart,' he, at least, who knew me best, never discovered it. He gave me his confidence—more, he gave me his love.

"Lord Chetwynde, when you came home and crushed me with your cruel words I said nothing, for I was overcome by your cruelty. Then I thought that the best way for me to do was to show you by my life and by my acts, rather than by any words, how unjust you had been. How you treated my advances you well know. Without being guilty of any discourtesy, you contrived to make me feel that I was abhorrent. Still I did not despair of clearing my character in your sight. I asked an interview. I tried to explain, but, as you well remember, you coolly pushed all my explanations aside as so much hypocritical pretense. My lord, you were educated by your father in the school of honor and chivalry. I will not ask you now if your conduct was chivalrous. I only ask you, was it even just?

"And all this time, my lord, what were my feelings toward you? Let me tell you, and you yourself can judge. I will confess them, though nothing less than despair would ever have wrung such a confession out of me. Let me tell you then, my lord, what my feelings were. Not as expressed in empty words or in prolix letters, but as manifested by acts.

"Your valet wrote me that you were ill. I left immediately, filled with anxiety. Anxiety and fatigue both overpowered me. When I reached Frankfort I was struck down by fever. It was because I found that you had left that my fever was so severe. Scarce had I recovered than I hurried to Baden, finding out your address from the people of the Frankfort Hotel. You had gone to Munich. I followed you to Munich, so weak that I had to be carried into my cab at Baden, and out of it at Munich. At Munich another attack of fever prostrated me. I had missed you again, and my anxiety was intolerable. A thousand dreary fears oppressed me. I thought that you were dying—"

Here Hilda's voice faltered, and she stopped for a time, struggling with her emotion.

"I thought that you were dying," she repeated. "In my fever my situation was rendered infinitely worse by this fear. But at length I recovered, and went on. I reached Lausanne. I found you at the last point of life. I had time to give you your medicine and leave directions with your nurse, and then I fell down senseless by your side.

"My lord, while you were ill *I* was worse. My life was despaired of. Would to God that I had died then and there in the crisis of that fever! But I escaped it, and once more rose from my bed.

"I dragged myself back to your side, and staid there on my sofa, keeping watch over you, till once more I was struck down. Then I recovered once more, and gained health and strength again. Tell me, my lord," and Hilda's eyes seemed to penetrate to the soul of Lord Chetwynde as she spoke—"tell me, is this the sign of a 'bad mind and heart?'"

As Hilda had spoken she had evinced the strongest agitation. Her hands clutched one another, her voice was tremulous with emotion, her face was white, and a hectic flush on either cheek showed her excitement. Lord Chetwynde would have been either more or less than human if he had listened unmoved. As it was, he felt moved to the depths of his soul. Yet he could not say one word.

"I am alone in the world," said Hilda, mournfully. "You promised once to see about my happiness. That was a vow extorted from a boy, and it is nothing in itself. You said, not long ago, that you intended to keep your promise by separating yourself from me and giving me some money. Lord Chetwynde, look at me, think of what I have done, and answer. Is this the way to secure my happiness? What is money to me? Money! Do I care for money? What is it that I care for? I? I only wish to die! I have but a short time to live. I feel that I am doomed. Your money, Lord Chetwynde, will soon go back to you. Spare your solicitors the trouble to which you are putting them. If you can give me death, it will be the best thing that you can bestow. I gave you life. Can you not return the boon by giving me death, my lord?"

These last words Hilda wailed out in low tones of despair which vibrated in Lord Chetwynde's breast.

"At least," said she, "do not be in haste about leaving me. I will soon leave you forever. It is not much I ask. Let me only be near you for a short time, my lord. It is a small wish. Bear with me. You will see, before I die, that I have not altogether a 'bad mind and heart.'"

Her voice sank down into low tones of supplication; her head drooped forward; her intense feeling overcame her; tears burst from her eyes and flowed unchecked.

"Lady Chetwynde," said Lord Chetwynde, in deep emotion, "do as you wish. You have my gratitude for your noble devotion. I owe my

life to you. If you really care about accompanying me I will not thwart your wishes. I can say no more. And let us never again speak of the past."

And this was all that Lord Chetwynde said.

CHAPTER LIX.

ON THE ROAD.

Before Lord Chetwynde left Lausanne the doctor told him all about the poison and the antidote. He enlarged with great enthusiasm upon Lady Chetwynde's devotion and foresight; but his information caused Lord Chetwynde to meditate deeply upon this thing. Hilda found out that the doctor had said this, and gave her explanation. She said that the valet had described the symptoms; that she had asked a London doctor, who suspected poison, and gave her an antidote. She herself, she said, did not know what to think of it, but had naturally suspected the valet. She had charged him with it on her arrival. He had looked very much confused, and had immediately fled from the place. His guilt, in her opinion, had been confirmed by his flight. To her opinion Lord Chetwynde assented, and concluded that his valet wished to plunder him. He now recalled many suspicious circumstances about him, and remembered that he had taken the man without asking any one about him, satisfied with the letters of recommendation which he had brought, and which he had not taken the trouble to verify. He now believed that these letters were all no better than forgeries, and that he had well-nigh fallen a victim to one of the worst of villains. In his mind this revelation of the doctor only gave a new claim upon his gratitude toward the woman who had rescued him.

Shortly after he started for Italy. Hilda went with him. His position was embarrassing. Here was a woman to whom he lay under the deepest obligations, whose tender and devoted love was manifested in every word and action, and yet he was utterly incapable of reciprocating that love. She was beautiful, but her beauty did not affect him; she was, as he thought, his wife, yet he could never be a husband to her. Her piteous appeal had moved his heart, and forced him to take her with him, yet he was looking forward impatiently for some opportunity of leaving her. He could think of India only as the place which was likely to give him this opportunity, and concluded that after a short stay in Florence he would leave for the East, and resume his old duties. Before leaving Lausanne he wrote to the authorities in England, and applied to be reinstated in some position in the Indian service, which he had not yet quitted, or, if possible, to go back to his old place. A return to India was now his only hope, and the only way by which he could escape from the very peculiar difficulties of his situation.

It was a trying position, but he took refuge in a certain lofty courtesy which well became him, and which might pass very well for that warmer feeling of which he was destitute. His natural kindliness of disposition softened his manner toward Hilda, and his sense of obligation made him tenderly considerate. If Hilda could have been content with any thing except positive love, she would have found happiness in that gentle and kindly and chivalrous courtesy which she received at the hands of Lord Chetwynde. Content with this she was not. It was something different from this that she desired; yet, after all, it was an immense advance on the old state of things. It gave her the chance of making herself known to Lord Chetwynde, a chance which had been denied to her before. Conversation was no longer impossible. At Chetwynde Castle there had been nothing but the most formal remarks; now there were things which approximated almost to an interchange of confidence. By her devotion, and by her confession of her feelings, she had presented herself to him in a new light, and that memorable confession of hers could not be forgotten. It was while traveling together that the new state of things was most manifest to her. She sat next to him in the carriage; she touched him; her arm was close to his. That touch thrilled through her, even though she knew too well that he was cold and calm and indifferent. But this was, at least, a better thing than that abhorrence and repugnance which he had formerly manifested; and the friendly smile and the genial remark which he often directed to her were received by her with joy, and treasured up in the depths of her soul as something precious.

Traveling thus together through scenes of grandeur and of beauty, seated side by side, it was impossible to avoid a closer intimacy than common. In spite of Lord Chetwynde's coolness, the very fact that he was thus thrown into constant contact with a woman who was at once beautiful and clever, and who at the same time had made an open confession of her devotion to him, was of itself sufficient to inspire something like kindliness of sentiment at least in his heart, even though that heart were the coldest and the least susceptible that ever beat. The scenes through which they passed were of themselves calculated in the highest degree to excite a communion of soul. Hilda was clever and well-read, with a deep love for the beautiful, and a familiar acquaintance with all modern literature. There was not a beautiful spot on the road which had been sung by poets or celebrated in fiction of which she was ignorant. Ferney, sacred to Voltaire; Geneva, the birth-place of Rousseau; the Jura Alps, sung by Byron; the thousand places of lesser note embalmed by French or German writers in song and story, were all greeted by her with a delight that was girlish in its enthusiastic demonstrativeness. Lord Chetwynde, himself intellectual, recognized and respected the brilliant intellect of his companion. He saw that the woman who had saved his life at the risk of her own, who had dropped down senseless at his bedside, overworn with duties self-imposed through love for him—the woman who had overwhelmed him with obligations of gratitude—could also dazzle him with her intellectual brilliancy, and surpass him in familiarity with the greatest geniuses of modern times.

Another circumstance had contributed toward the formation of a closer association between these two. Hilda had no maid with her, but was traveling unattended. On leaving Lausanne she found that Gretchen was unwilling to go to Italy, and had, therefore, parted with her with many kind words, and the bestowal of presents

sufficiently valuable to make the kind-hearted German maid keep in her memory for many years to come the recollection of that gentle suffering English lady, whose devotion to her husband had been shown so signally, and almost at the cost of her own life. Hilda took no maid with her. Either she could not obtain one in so small a place as Lausanne, or else she did not choose to employ one. Whatever the cause may have been, the result was to throw her more upon the care of Lord Chetwynde, who was forced, if not from gratitude at least from common politeness, to show her many of those little attentions which are demanded by a lady from a gentleman. Traveling together as they did, those attentions were required more frequently than under ordinary circumstances; and although they seemed to Lord Chetwynde the most ordinary commonplaces, yet to Hilda every separate act of attention or of common politeness carried with it a joy which was felt through all her being. If she had reasoned about that joy, she might perhaps have seen how unfounded it was. But she did not reason about it; it was enough to her that he was by her side, and that acts like these came from him to her. In her mind all the past and all the future were forgotten, and there was nothing but an enjoyment of the present.

Their journey lay through regions which presented every thing that could charm the taste or awaken admiration. At first there was the grandeur of Alpine scenery. From this they emerged into the softer beauty of the Italian clime. It was the Simplon Road which they traversed, that gigantic monument to the genius of Napoleon, which is more enduring than even the fame of Marengo or Austerlitz; and this road, with its alternating scenes of grandeur and of beauty, of glory and of gloom, had elicited the utmost admiration from each. At length, one day, as they were descending this road on the slope nearest Italy, on leaving Domo d'Ossola, they came to a place where the boundless plains of Lombardy lay stretched before them. There the verdurous fields stretched away beneath their eyes—an expanse of living green; seeming like the abode of perpetual summer to those who looked down from the habitation of winter. Far away spread the plains to the distant horizon, where the purple Apennines arose bounding the view. Nearer was the Lago Maggiore with its wondrous islands, the Isola Bella and the Isola Madre, covered with their hanging gardens, whose green foliage rose over the dark blue waters of the lake beneath; while beyond that lake lay towns and villages and hamlets, whose far white walls gleamed brightly amidst the vivid green of the surrounding plain; and vineyards also, and groves and orchards and forests of olive and chestnut trees. It was a scene which no other on earth can surpass, if it can equal, and one which, to travelers descending the Alps, has in every age brought a resistless charm.

This was the first time that Hilda had seen this glorious land. Lord Chetwynde had visited Naples, but to him the prospect that lay beneath was as striking as though he had never seen any of the beauties of Italy. Hilda, however, felt its power most. Both gazed long and with deep admiration upon this matchless scene without uttering one word to express their emotions; viewing it in silence, as though to break that silence would break the spell which had been thrown over them by the first sight of this wondrous land. At last Hilda broke that spell. Carried away by the excitement of the moment she started to her feet, and stood erect in the carriage, and then burst forth into that noble paraphrase which Byron has made of the glorious sonnet of Filicaja:

"Italia! O Italia! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past,
On thy sweet brow is sorrow plowed by shame,
And annals graven in characters of flame.
O God! that thou wert in thy nakedness
Less lovely, or more powerful, and couldst claim
Thy right, and awe the robbers back, who press
To shed thy blood and drink the tears of thy distress."

She stood like a Sibyl, inspired by the scene before her. Pale, yet lovely, with all her intellectual beauty refined by the sorrows through which she had passed, she herself might have been taken for an image of that Italy which she thus invoked. Lord Chetwynde looked at her, and amidst his surprise at such an outburst of enthusiasm he had some such thoughts as these. But suddenly, from some unknown cause, Hilda sank back into her seat, and burst into tears. At the display of such emotion Lord Chetwynde looked on deeply disturbed. What possible connection there could be between these words and her agitation he could not see. But he was full of pity for her, and he did what was most natural. He took her hand, and spoke kind words to her, and tried to soothe her. At his touch her agitation subsided. She smiled through her tears, and looked at him with a glance that spoke unutterable things. It was the first time that Lord Chetwynde had shown toward her any thing approaching to tenderness.

On that same day another incident occurred.

A few miles beyond Domo d'Ossola there was an inn where they had stopped to change horses. They waited here for a time till the horses were ready, and then resumed their journey. The road went on before them for miles, winding along gently in easy curves and with a gradual descent toward those smiling vales which lay beneath them. As they drove onward each turn in the road seemed to bring some new view before them, and to disclose some fresh glimpse to their eyes of that voluptuous Italian beauty which they were now beholding, and which appeared all the lovelier from the contrast which it presented to that sublime Alpine scenery—the gloom of awful gorges, the grandeur of snow-capped heights through which they had been journeying.

Inside the carriage were Lord Chetwynde and Hilda. Outside was the driver. Hilda was just pointing out to Lord Chetwynde some peculiar tint in the purple of the distant Apennines when suddenly the carriage gave a lurch, and, with a wild bound, the horses started off at full speed down the road. Something had happened. Either the harness had given way or the horses were frightened; at any rate, they were running away at a fearful pace, and the driver, erect on his seat, was striving with all his might to hold in the maddened animals. His efforts were all to no purpose. On they went, like the wind, and the carriage, tossed from side to side at their wild springs, seemed sometimes to leap into the air. The road before them wound on down a spur of the mountains, with deep ravines on

"HE LAID HER DOWN UPON THE GRASS."

one side—a place full of danger for such a race as this.

It was a fearful moment. For a time Hilda said not a word; she sat motionless, like one paralyzed by terror; and then, as the carriage gave a wilder lurch than usual, she gave utterance to a loud cry of fear, and flung her arms around Lord Chetwynde.

"Save me! oh, save me!" she exclaimed.

She clung to him desperately, as though in thus clinging to him she had some assurance of safety. Lord Chetwynde sat erect, looking out upon the road before him, down which they were dashing, and saying not a word. Mechanically he put his arm around this panic-stricken woman, who clung to him so tightly, as though by that silent gesture he meant to show that he would protect her as far as possible. But in so perilous a race all possibility of protection was out of the question.

At last the horses, in their onward career, came to a curve in the road, where, on one side, there was a hill, and on the other a declivity. It was a sharp turn. Their impetus was too swift to be readily stayed. Dashing onward, the carriage was whirled around after them, and was thrown off the road down the declivity. For a few paces the horses dragged it onward as it lay on its side, and then the weight of the carriage was too much for them. They stopped, then staggered, then backed, and then, with a heavy plunge, both carriage and horses went down into the gully beneath.

It was not more than thirty feet of a descent, and the bottom was the dry bed of a mountain torrent. The horses struggled and strove to free themselves. The driver jumped off uninjured, and sprang at them to stop them. This he succeeded in doing, at the cost of some severe bruises.

Meanwhile the occupants of the carriage had felt the full consciousness of the danger. As the carriage went down Hilda clung more closely to Lord Chetwynde. He, on his part, said not a word, but braced himself for the fall. The carriage rolled over and over in its descent, and at last stopped. Lord Chetwynde, with Hilda in his arms, was thrown violently down. As soon as he could he raised himself and drew Hilda out from the wreck of the carriage.

She was senseless.

He laid her down upon the grass. Her eyes were closed, her hair was all disordered, her face was as white as the face of a corpse. A stream

of blood trickled down over her marble forehead from a wound in her head. It was a piteous sight.

Lord Chetwynde took her in his arms and carried her off a little distance, to a place where there was some water in the bed of the brook. With this he sought to restore her to consciousness. For a long time his efforts were unavailing.

At last he called to the driver.

"Tie up one of the horses and get on the other," he said, "and ride for your life to the nearest house. Bring help. The lady is stunned, and must be taken away as soon as possible. Get them to knock up a litter, and bring a couple of stout fellows back to help us carry her. Make haste—for your life."

The driver at once comprehended the whole situation. He did as he was bid, and in a few minutes the sound of his horse's hoofs died away in the distance.

Lord Chetwynde was left alone with Hilda.

She lay in his arms, her beautiful face on his shoulder, tenderly supported; that face white, and the lips bloodless, the eyes closed, and blood trickling from the wound on her head. It was not a sight upon which any one might look unmoved.

And Lord Chetwynde was moved to his inmost soul by that sight.

Who was this woman? His wife! the one who stood between him and his desires.

Ah, true! But she was something more.

And now, as he looked at her thus lying in his arms, there came to him the thought of all that she had been to him—the thought of her undying love—her matchless devotion. That pale face, those closed eyes, those mute lips, that beautiful head, stained with oozing blood, all spoke to him with an eloquence which awakened a response within him.

Was this the end of all that love and that devotion? Was this the fulfillment of his promise to General Pomeroy? Was he doing by this woman as she had done by him? Had she not made more than the fullest atonement for the offenses and follies of the past? Had she not followed him through Europe to seek him and to snatch him from the grasp of a villain? Had she not saved his life at the risk of her own? Had she not stood by his side till she fell lifeless at his feet in her unparalleled self-devotion?

These were the questions that came to him.

He loved her not; but if he wished for love, could he ever find any equal to this? That poor, frail, slender frame pleaded piteously; that white face, as it lay upturned, was itself a prayer.

Involuntarily he stooped down, and in his deep pity he pressed his lips to that icy brow. Then once more he looked at her. Once more he touched her, and this time his lips met hers.

"My God!" he groaned; "what can I do? Why did I ever see—that other one?"

An hour passed and the driver returned. Four men came with him, carrying a rude litter. On this Hilda's senseless form was placed. And thus they carried her to the nearest house, while Lord Chetwynde followed in silence and in deep thought.

CHAPTER LX.

THE CLAWS OF THE AMERICAN EAGLE.

At length Obed prepared to leave Naples and visit other places in Italy. He intended to go to Rome and Florence, after which he expected to go to Venice or Milan, and then across the Alps to Germany. Two vetturas held the family, and in due time they arrived at Terracina. Here they passed the night, and early on the following day they set out, expecting to traverse the Pontine Marshes and reach Albano by evening.

These famous marshes extend from Terracina to Nettuno. They are about forty-five miles in length and from four to twelve in breadth. Drained successively by Roman, by Goth, and by pope, they successively relapsed into their natural state, until the perseverance of Pius VI. completed the work. It is now largely cultivated, but the scenery is monotonous and the journey tedious. The few inhabitants found here get their living by hunting and by robbery, and are distinguished by their pale and sickly appearance. At this time the disturbed state of Italy, and particularly of the papal dominions, made traveling sometimes hazardous, and no place was more dangerous than this. Yet Obed gave this no thought, but started on the journey with as much cheerfulness as though he were making a railway trip from New York to Philadelphia.

About half-way there is a solitary inn, situated close by the road-side, with a forlorn and desolate air about it. It is two stories high, with small windows, and the whitewashed stone walls made it look more like a lazaretto than any thing else. Here they stopped two hours to feed the horses and to take their déjeuner. The place was at this time kept by a miserable old man and his wife, on whom the unhealthy atmosphere of the marshes seemed to have brought a premature decay. Obed could not speak Italian, so that he was debarred from the pleasure of talking with this man; but he exhibited much sympathy toward him, and made him a present of a bundle of cigars—an act which the old man viewed, at first, with absolute incredulity, and at length with unutterable gratitude.

Leaving this place they drove on for about two miles, when suddenly the carriage in which Obed and the family were traveling fell forward with a crash, and the party were thrown pell-mell together. The horses stopped. No injury was done to any one, and Obed got out to see what had taken place. The front axle was broken.

Here was a very awkward dilemma, and it was difficult to tell what ought to be done. There was the other carriage, but it was small, and could not contain the family. The two maids, also, would have to be left behind. Obed thought, at first, of sending on his family and waiting; but he soon dismissed this idea. For the present, at least, he saw that they would have to drive back to the inn, and this they finally did. Here Obed exerted all his ingenuity and all his mechanical skill in a futile endeavor to repair the axle. But the rough patch which he succeeded at last in making was so inefficient that, on attempting to start once more, the carriage again broke down, and they were forced to give up this hope.

Three hours had now passed away, and it had already grown altogether too late to think of trying to finish the journey. Again the question arose, what was to be done? To go back was now as much out of the question as to go forward. One resource only seemed left them, and that was to stay here for the night, and send back to Terracina for a new carriage. This decision Obed finally arrived at, and he communicated it to his valet, and ordered him to see if they could have any accommodations for the night.

The valet seemed somewhat alarmed at this proposal.

"It's a dangerous place," said he. "The country swarms with brigands. We had better take the ladies back."

"Take the ladies back!" cried Obed. "How can we do that? We can't all cram into the small carriage. And, besides, as to danger—by this time it's as dangerous on the road as it is here."

"Oh no; travelers will be upon the road—"

"Pooh! there's no danger when one is inside of a stone house like this. Why, man, this house is a regular fort. Besides, who is there that would attack an inn?"

"The brigands," said the valet. "They're all around, prowling about, and will be likely to pay a visit here. This house, at the best of times, does not have a good name."

"Well," said Obed, "let them come on."

"You forget, Sir," said the valet, "that you are alone."

"Not a bit of it," said Obed; "I'm well aware that I'm alone."

"But you're worse than alone," remonstrated the valet, earnestly. "You have your family. That is the thing that makes the real danger; for, if any thing happens to you, what will become of them?"

"Pooh!" said Obed; "there are plenty of 'ifs' whenever any man is on the look-out for danger. Now, I ain't on the look-out. Why should I trouble myself? Whenever any enemy shows himself I'll be ready. If a man is always going to imagine danger, and borrow trouble, what will become of him? This place seems to me the best place for the family now—far better than the road, at any rate. I wouldn't have them dragged back to Terracina on any account. It 'll be dark long before we get there, and traveling by night on the Pontine Marshes ain't particularly healthy. There's less risk for them here than any where else; so, young man, you'd better look up the beds, and see what they can do for us."

The valet made some further remonstrances; he described the ruthless character of the Italian brigands, told Obed about the dangerous condition of the country, hinted that the old man and his wife were themselves possibly in alliance with the brigands, and again urged him to change his plans. But Obed was not moved in the slightest degree by these representations. He had considered it all, he said, and had made up his mind. As he saw it, all the risk, and all the fatigue too, which was quite as important a thing, were on the road, and whatever safety there was, whether from brigands or miasma, lay in the inn.

The valet then went to see about the accommodations for the party. They were rude, it is true, yet sufficient in such an emergency. The old man and his wife bestirred themselves to make every thing ready for the unexpected guests, and, with the assistance of the maids, their rooms were prepared.

After this the valet drove back with the vetturino, promising to come as early as possible on the following day.

During Obed's conversation with the valet the ladies had been in the hotel, and had therefore heard nothing of what had been said. They were quite ignorant of the existence of any danger, and Obed thought it the best plan to keep them in ignorance, unless actual danger should arise. For his own part, he had meant what he said. He was aware that there was danger; he knew that the country was in an unsettled and lawless condition, and that roving bands of robbers were scouring the papal territories. From the very consciousness that he had of this danger, he had decided in favor of stopping. He believed the road to be more dangerous than the inn. If there was to be any attack of brigands, he much preferred to receive it here; and he thought this a more unlikely place for such an attack than any other.

The warning of the valet made a sufficiently deep impression upon him to cause him to examine very carefully the position of his rooms, and the general appearance of the house. The house itself was as strong as a fortress, and a dozen men, well posted, could have defended it against a thousand. But Obed was alone, and had to consider the prospects of one man in a defense. The rooms which he occupied favored this. There were two. One was a large one at the end of the house, lighted by one small window. This his family and Zillah occupied; somewhat crowded, it is true, yet not at all uncomfortable. A wide hearth was there, and a blazing peat fire kept down the chill of the marshy exhalations. Outside of this was a smaller room, and this was Obed's. A fire was burning here also. A window lighted it, and a stout door opened into the hall. The bed was an old-fashioned four-posted structure of enormous weight.

All these things Obed took in with one rapid glance, and saw the advantages of his position. In these rooms, with his revolver and his ammunition, he felt quite at ease. He felt somewhat grieved at that moment that he did not know Italian, for he wished very much to ask some questions of the old inn-keeper; but this was a misfortune which he had to endure.

As long as the daylight lasted Obed wandered about outside. Then dinner came, and after that the time hung heavily on his hands. At last he went to his room; the family had retired some time before. There was a good supply of peat, and with this he replenished the fire. Then he drew the massive oaken bedstead in front of the door, and lounged upon it, smoking and meditating.

The warnings of the valet had produced this effect at least upon Obed, that he had concluded not to go to sleep. He determined to remain awake, and though such watchfulness might not be needed, yet he felt that for his family's sake it was wisest and best. To sit up one night, or rather to lounge on a bed smoking, was nothing, and there was plenty of occupation for his thoughts.

Time passed on. Midnight came, and nothing had occurred. Another hour passed; and then another. It was two o'clock.

About a quarter of an hour after this Obed was roused by a sudden knocking at the door of the inn. Shouts followed. He heard the old man descend the stairs. Then the door was opened, and loud noisy footsteps were heard entering the inn.

At this Obed began to feel that his watchfulness was not useless.

Some time now elapsed. Those who had come were sufficiently disorderly. Shouts and cries and yells arose. Obed imagined that they were refreshing themselves. He tried to guess at the possible number, and thought that there could not be more than a dozen, if so many. Yet he had acquired such a contempt for Italians, and had such confidence in himself, that he felt very much the same, at the prospect of an encounter with them, as a grown man might feel at an encounter with as many boys.

During this time he made no change in his position. His revolver was in his breast pocket, and he had cartridges enough for a long siege. He smoked still, for this habit was a deeply confirmed one with Obed; and lolling at the foot of the bed, with his head against the wall, he awaited further developments.

At last there was a change in the noise. A silence followed; and then he heard footsteps moving toward the hall. He listened. The footsteps ascended the stairs!

They ascended the stairs, and came nearer and nearer. There did not seem to be so many as a dozen. Perhaps some remained below. Such were his thoughts.

They came toward his room.

At length he heard the knob of the door turning gently. Of course, as the door was locked, and as the bed was in front of it, this produced no effect. On Obed the only effect was that he sat upright and drew his revolver from his pocket, still smoking.

Then followed some conversation outside.

Then there came a knock.

"Who's there?" said Obed, mildly.

"Aperite!" was the answer, in a harsh voice.

"What?"

"Aperite. Siamo poveri. Date vostro argento."

"Me don't understand *Italian*," said Obed. "Me American. Speeky English, and go to blazes!"

At this there was a pause, and then a dull deep crash, as if the whole body outside had precipitated themselves against the door.

Obed held his pistol quickly toward the door opposite the thinnest panel, which had yielded slightly to that blow, and fired.

Once!

Twice!!

Thrice!!!

Three explosions burst forth.

And then came sharp and sudden deep groans of pain, intermingled with savage yells of rage. There was a sound as of bodies falling, and retreating footsteps, and curses low and deep.

Loud outcries came from the adjoining room. The noise had awakened the family.

Obed stepped to the door.

"Don't be afraid," said he, quietly. "It's only some brigands. But keep cool. *I'll* take care of you. Perhaps you'd better get up and dress, though. At any rate, keep cool. You needn't bother as long as you've got *me*."

CHAPTER LXI.

AT FLORENCE.

After her accident Hilda was carried to the nearest house, and there she recovered, after some time, from her swoon. She knew nothing of what Lord Chetwynde had thought and done during that time when she lay in his arms, and he had bent over her so full of pity and sorrow. Some time elapsed before she saw him, for he had ridden off himself to the nearest town to get a conveyance. When he returned it was very late, and she had to go to bed through weakness. And thus they did not meet until the following morning.

When they did meet Lord Chetwynde asked kindly about her health, but evinced no stronger feeling than kindness—or pity. She was pale and sad; she was eager for some sign of tenderness, but the sign was not forthcoming. Lord Chetwynde was kind and sympathetic. He tried to cheer her; he exerted himself to please her and to soothe her, but that was all. That self-reproach which had thrilled him as she lay lifeless in his arms had passed as soon as she left those arms, and, in the presence of the one absorbing passion of his soul, Hilda was nothing.

When they resumed their journey it was as before. He was courteous to an extreme. He anticipated her wishes and saw after her comforts with the greatest solicitude, but never did he evince any desire to pass beyond the limits of conventional politeness. To him she was simply a lady traveling in his company, to whom he was under every obligation, as far as gratitude was concerned, or kindly and watchful attention, but toward whom no feeling of tenderness ever arose.

He certainly neglected none of those ordinary acts of courteous attention which are common between gentlemen and ladies. At Milan he took her around to see all the sights of that famous city. The Breda Palace, the Amphitheatre, above all, the Cathedral, were visited, and nothing was omitted which might give her pleasure. Yet all this was different from what it had been before. Since the accident Hilda had grown more sad, and lost her sprightliness and enthusiasm. On first recovering her senses she had learned about the events of that accident, and that Lord Chetwynde had tried to bring her to life again. She had hoped much from this, and had fully expected when she saw him again to find in him something softer than before. In this she had been utterly disappointed. Her heart now sank within her, and scarcely any hope was left. Languid and dull, she tried no longer to win Lord Chetwynde by brilliancy of conversation, or by enthusiastic interest in the beautiful of nature and of art. These had failed once; why should she try them again? And since he had been unmoved by the spectacle of her lifeless form—the narrow escape from death of one who he well knew

would die to save him—what was there left for her to do?

At length they resumed their journey, and in due time reached Florence. Here new changes took place. Their arrival here terminated that close association enforced by their journey which had been so precious to Hilda. Here Lord Chetwynde of course drifted away, and she could not hope to see him except at certain stated intervals. Now more than ever she began to lose hope. The hopes that she had once formed seemed now to be baseless. And why, she asked herself bitterly—why was it so impossible for him to love her? Would not any other man have loved her under such circumstances?

At Florence Lord Chetwynde went his own way. He visited most of the places of interest in company with her, took her to the Duomo, the Church of Santa Croce, the Palazzi Vecchio and Pitti, walked with her through the picture-galleries, and drove out with her several times. After this there was nothing more to be done, and he was left to his own resources, and she, necessarily, to hers. She could not tell where he went, but merely conjectured that he was idling about without any particular purpose, in the character of a common sight-seer.

Hilda thus at length, left so much to herself, without the joy of his presence to soften her, grew gradually hopeless and desperate; and there began to rise within her bitter feelings, like those of former days. In the midst of these her darker nature made itself manifest, and there came the vengeful promptings of outraged love. With her vengeance meant something more than it did with common characters; and when that fit was on her there came regrets that she had ever left Chetwynde, and gloomy ideas about completing her interrupted work after all. But these feelings were fitful, for at times hope would return again, and tenderness take the place of vindictiveness. From hope she would again sink into despair, and sometimes meditate upon that dark resolve which she had once hinted to Gualtier at the Hôtel Gibbon.

Amidst all this her pride was roused. Why should she remain in this position—a hanger-on—forcing herself on an unwilling man who at best only tolerated her? The only soft feeling for her that had ever arisen in his heart was nothing more than pity. Could she hope that ever this pity would change to love, or that even the pity itself would last? Was he not even now longing to get rid of her, and impatiently awaiting tidings of his Indian appointment? To go to India, she saw plainly, simply meant to get rid of her. This, she saw, was his fixed determination. And for her—why should she thus remain, so deeply humiliated, when she was not wanted?

So she argued with herself, but still she staid on. For love makes the proudest a craven, and turns the strength of the strongest into weakness; and so, in spite of herself, she staid, because she could not go.

Meanwhile the state of Lord Chetwynde's mind was not by any means enviable. He found himself in a position which was at once unexpected and, to him, extremely embarrassing. Every feeling of gratitude, every prompting of common generosity, compelled him to exhibit toward Hilda a greater degree of kindness than existed in his heart. The association of a long journey had necessarily thrown him upon her society, and there had been times when he had found her agreeable; there had also been that memorable episode when her poor, pale face, with its stain of blood over the white forehead, had drawn forth his deepest pity, and roused him to some approach to tenderness. But with the occasion the feeling had passed; and the tenderness, born of so piteous a sight, returned no more. Her own dullness afterward deprived him even of the chance of finding her an agreeable companion. He saw that she was deeply melancholy. Yet what could he do? Even if he had wished it he could not have forced himself to love this woman, notwithstanding her devotion to himself. And this he did not even wish. Not all his sense of honor, not all his emotions of gratitude, not all his instincts of generosity, not even the remembrance of his solemn promise to General Pomeroy, could excite within him any desire that his heart might change from its affection and its longing for another, to yield that love to her.

True, once or twice his heart had smote him as he thought of his utter coldness and want of gratitude toward this woman who had done so much for him. This feeling was very painful on that day of the accident. Yet it passed. He could not force himself to muse over his own shortcomings. He could not bring himself to wish that he should be one whit more grateful to her or more tender. Any thought of her being ever more to him than she was now seemed repugnant. Any wish for it was out of the question. Indeed, he never thought of it as being within the bounds of possibility. For behind all these late events there lay certain things which made it impossible for him, under ordinary circumstances, ever to become fully reconciled to her.

For, after all, in his cooler moods he now felt how she was associated with the bitterest memories of his life. She it was who had been the cause, unwilling no doubt as he now thought, but still no less the cause of the blight that had descended upon his life. As that life had passed he could not help cursing the day when first General Pomeroy proposed that unholy agreement. It was this that had exiled him from his native land and would keep him an exile forever. It was this which denied to him the joys of virtuous love, when his heart had been filled with one image—an image which now was never absent. Bound by the law to this woman, who was named his wife, he could never hope in any way to gain that other one on whom all his heart was fixed. Between him and those hopes that made life precious she stood and rendered those hopes impossible.

Then, too, he could not avoid recalling his life in India, which she had tried to make, as far as in her lay, one long misery, by those malevolent letters which she had never ceased to write. Above all, he could never forget the horror of indignation which had been awakened within him by that last letter, and the fierce vows which he had made to be avenged on her. All this was yet in his memory in spite of the events of later days. True, she had relented from her former savage spirit, and had changed from hate to love. She had traveled far to save

him from death. She had watched by him day and night till her own life well-nigh gave way. She had repented, and had marked her repentance by a devotion which could not be surpassed. For all this he felt grateful. His gratitude, indeed, had been so profound and so sincere that it had risen up between him and his just hate, and had forced him to forgive her fully and freely, and to the uttermost, for all that she had done of her own accord, and also for all of which she had been the accidental cause. He had lost his repugnance to her. He could now talk to her, he could even take her hand, and could have transient emotions of tenderness toward her. But what then? What was the value of these feelings? He had forgiven her, but he had not forgotten the past. That was impossible. The memory of that past still remained, and its results were still before him. He felt those results every hour of his life. Above all, she still stood before him as the one thing, and the only thing, which formed an obstacle between him and his happiness. He might pity her, he might be grateful to her; but the intense fervor of one passion, and the longing desire to which it gave rise, made it impossible for her ever to seem to him any thing else than the curse of his life.

At Florence he was left more to himself. He was no longer forced to sit by her side. He gradually kept by himself; for, though he could tolerate her, he could not seek her. Indeed, his own feelings impelled him to avoid her. The image of that one who never left his memory had such an effect on him that he preferred solitude and his own thoughts. In this way he could best struggle with himself and arrange his lonely and desolate future. India now appeared the one hope that was left him. There he might find distraction from troublesome thoughts in his old occupations, and among his old associates. He had bidden farewell to Chetwynde forever. He had left the fate of Chetwynde in the hands of his solicitors; he had signed away all his rights; he had broken the entail; and had faced the prospect of the extinction of his ancient family. This resolution had cost him so much that it was impossible now to go back from it. The exhibition of Hilda's devotion never changed his resolution for an instant. The papers still remained with his solicitors, nor did he for one moment dream of countermanding the orders which he had once given.

What Lord Chetwynde most desired was solitude. Florence had been chosen by him as a resting-place where he might await letters from England about his Indian appointment, and for those letters he waited every day. Under these circumstances he avoided all society. He had taken unpretending lodgings, and in the Hôtel Meubles, overlooking the Ponta della Trinita, he was lost in the crowd of fellow-lodgers. His suite of apartments extended over the third story. Below him was a Russian Prince and a German Grand Duke, and above and all around was a crowd of travelers of all nations. He brought no letters. He desired no acquaintances. Florence, under the new régime, was too much agitated by recent changes for its noblesse to pay any attention to a stranger, however distinguished, unless he was forced upon them; and so Lord Chetwynde had the most complete isolation. If Hilda had ever had any ideas of going with Lord Chetwynde into Florentine society she was soon undeceived, when, as the days passed, she found that Florentine society took no notice of her. Whatever disappointment she may have felt, Lord Chetwynde only received gratification from this, since it spared him every annoyance, and left him to himself, after the first week or so.

By himself he thus occupied his time. He rode sometimes through the beautiful country which surrounds Florence on every side. When weary of this he used to stroll about the city, along the Lungh' Arno, or through the Casino, or among the churches. But his favorite place of resort was the Boboli Gardens; for here there was sufficient life and movement to be found among the throng of visitors; or, if he wished seclusion, he could find solitude among the sequestered groves and romantic grottoes of this enchanting spot.

Here one day he wandered, and found a place among the trees which commanded a view of one of the principal avenues of the gardens. In the distance there opened a vista through which was revealed the fair outline of Florence, with its encircling hills, and its glorious Val d'Arno. There arose the stupendous outline of Il Duomo, the stately form of the Baptistery, the graceful shaft of the Campanile, the medieval grandeur of the Palazzo Vecchio; and the severe Etruscan massiveness of the Pitti Palace was just below. Far away the Arno wound on, through the verdurous plain, while on either side the hills arose dotted with white villas and deep green olive groves. Is there any view on earth which can surpass this one, where

"Arno wins us to the fair white walls,
Where the Etrurian Athens claims and keeps
A softer feeling for her fairy halls.
Girt by her theatre of hills, she reaps
Her corn and wine and oil, and Plenty leaps
To laughing life, with her redundant horn.
Along the banks where smiling Arno sweeps
Was modern Luxury of Commerce born,
And buried Learning rose, redeemed, to a new morn."

It was upon this scene that Lord Chetwynde was looking out, lost in thoughts which were sometimes taken up with the historic charms of this unrivaled valley, and sometimes with his own sombre future, when suddenly his attention was arrested by a figure passing along the pathway immediately beneath him. The new-comer was a tall, broad-shouldered, square-faced man; he wore a dress-coat and a felt hat; he had no gloves, but his thumbs were inserted in the armholes of his waistcoat; and as he sauntered along he looked around with a leisurely yet comprehensive stare. Lord Chetwynde was seated in a place which made him unseen to any in the path, while it afforded him the fullest opportunities of seeing others. This man, who thus walked on, turned his full face toward him and disclosed the well-known features of Obed Chute.

The sight of this man sent a strange thrill to the inmost heart of Lord Chetwynde. He here! In Florence! And his family, were they with him? And *she*—when he saw him in London he said that she was yet with him—was she with him now? Such were the thoughts which came to Lord Chetwynde at the sight of that face. The next instant he rose, hurried down to the path after Obed, who had strode onward and catching his arm, he said:

"Mr. Chute, you here! When did you arrive?"

Obed turned with a start and saw his friend.

"Windham again!" he exclaimed, "by all that's wonderful! But how did you get here?"

"I? Oh, I've been here two or three weeks. But it doesn't seem possible that it should really be you," he added, with greater warmth than was usual to him, as he wrung Obed's hand.

"It's possible," said Obed, with a characteristic squeeze of Lord Chetwynde's hand, which made it numb for half an hour afterward. "It's possible, my boy, for it's the actual fact. But still, I must say, you're about the last man I expected to see in these diggins. When I saw you in London you were up to your eyes in business, and were expectin' to start straight off and make a bee-line for India."

"Well, that is what I'm doing now; I'm on my way there."

"On your way there? You don't say so! But you'll stay here some time?"

"Oh yes; I've some little time to spare. The fact is I came here to pass my leisure time. I'm expecting a letter every day which may send me off. But it may not come for weeks."

"And you're going back to India?" said Obed.

"Yes."

"I should think you'd rather stay home—among your friends."

"Well—I don't know," said Lord Chetwynde, with assumed indifference. "The fact is, life in India unfits one for life in England. We get new tastes and acquire new habits. I never yet saw a returned Indian who could be content. For my part, I'm too young yet to go in for being a returned Indian; and so after I finished my business I applied for a reappointment."

"There's a good deal in what you say," remarked Obed. "Your British island is contracted. A man who has lived in a country like India feels this. We Americans, accustomed as we are to the unlimited atmosphere of a boundless continent, always feel depressed in a country like England. There is in your country, Sir, a physical and also a moral constraint which, to a free, republican, continental American, is suffocating. And hence my dislike to the mother country."

They walked on together chatting about numerous things. Obed referred once more to India.

"It's queer," said he; "your British Empire is so tremendous that it seems to cover the earth. After I left the States it seemed to me that I couldn't go any where without seeing the British flag. There was Australia, a continent in itself; and Hong Kong; and India, another continent; and Aden, and Malta. You have a small country too, not much larger than New York State."

"Well," said Lord Chetwynde, with a smile, "we once owned a great deal more, you know. We had colonies that were worth all the rest. Unfortunately those colonies took it into their heads to set up for themselves, and started that independent nation of the Stars and Stripes that you belong to. If it hadn't been for that abominable Stamp Act, and other acts equally abominable, you and I might now be under the same flag, belonging to an empire which might set the whole united world at defiance. It's a pity it was not so. The only hope now left is that our countries may always be good friends, as they are now, as you and I are—as we always are, whenever we meet under such circumstances as those which occurred when you and I became acquainted. 'Blood is thicker than water,' said old Tatnall, when he sent his Yankee sailors to help Admiral Hope; and the same sentiment is still in the mind of every true Englishman whenever he sees an American of the right sort."

"Them's my sentiments," said Obed, heartily. "And although I don't generally hanker after Britishers, yet I have a kind of respect for the old country, in spite of its narrowness and contraction, and all the more when I see that it can turn out men like you."

After a short stroll the two seated themselves in a quiet sequestered place, and had a long conversation. Obed informed him of the many events which had occurred since their last meeting. The news about Black Bill was received by Lord Chetwynde with deep surprise, and he had a strong hope that this might lead to the capture of Gualtier. Little did he suspect the close connection which he had had with the principals in this crime.

He then questioned Obed, with deep interest, about his life in Naples, about his journey to Florence, and many other things, with the purpose of drawing him on to speak about one whom he could not name without emotion, but about whom he longed to hear. Obed said nothing about her; but, in the course of the conversation, he told all about that affair in the Pontine Marshes, in which he recently vanished from view at a very critical moment.

Obed's account was given with his usual modesty; for this man, who was often so grandiloquent on the subject of his country, was very meek on the subject of himself. To give his own words would be to assign a very unimportant part to the chief actor in a very remarkable affair, so that the facts themselves may be more appropriately stated. These facts Lord Chetwynde gathered from Obed's narrative in spite of his extreme modesty.

After Obed's shot, then, there had been silence for a time, or rather inaction among the assailants. The agitation of his family excited his sympathy, and once more he reassured them, telling them that the affair was not worth thinking about, and urging them to be calm. His words inspired courage among them, and they all arose and dressed. Their room was at the end of the building, as has been said. Obed's room adjoined it, and the only entrance into their room was through his. A narrow passage ran from the central hall as far as the wall of their room, and on the side of the passage was the door which led into Obed's.

After putting some more peat on the fire, he called to his sister to watch at the window of her room, and then replenishing his pipe, and loading the discharged chambers of his revolver, he awaited the renewal of hostilities. The long silence that followed showed him that his fire had been very serious, and he began to think that they would not return. So the time passed until five o'clock came. The women in the adjoining room were perfectly silent, but watchful, and apparently calm. Below there were occasional sounds of footsteps, which showed that the assailants were still in the place. The excitement

"TO SPRING FORWARD WITH LEVELED PISTOL UPON HIS ASSAILANTS WAS THE WORK OF A MOMENT."

of the occasion was rather agreeable to Obed than otherwise. He felt that he had the advantage in every respect, and was certain that there could not be very many assailants below. Their long delay in resuming the assault showed that they were cowed.

At last, however, to his intense gratification, he heard footsteps on the stairs. He knew by the sound that there could not be more than four, or perhaps six. When near his door the footsteps stopped. There was a momentary silence, and then suddenly a tremendous blow, and a panel of the door crashed in at the stroke of an axe, the head of which followed it. Quick as lightning Obed took aim. He saw how the axe had fallen, and judged exactly the position of the man that dealt the blow. He fired. A shriek followed. That shot had told. Wild curses arose. There was a mad rush at the door, and again the axe fell.

Once more Obed watched the fall of the axe and fired. Again that shot told. There were groans and shrieks of rage, and deep, savage curses.

And now at last Obed rose to the level of the occasion. He rapidly reloaded the emptied chambers of his revolver. Stepping to the door of the inner room he spoke some soothing words, and then hurrying back, he drew the ponderous bedstead away. Outside he heard shuffling, as of footsteps, and thought they might be dragging away those who had been wounded last. All this had been done in a moment. To unlock the door, to spring forward with leveled pistol upon his assailants, was but the work of another moment.

It was now dim morning twilight. The scene outside was plainly revealed. There were three men dragging away two—those two who had been wounded by the last shots. On these Obed sprang. One went down before his shot. The others, with a cry of terror, ran down the stairs, and out of the house. Obed pursued. They ran wildly up the road. Again Obed fired, and one wretch fell. Then he put the revolver in his pocket, and chased the other man. The distance between them lessened rapidly. At last Obed came up. He reached out his arm and caught him by the collar. With a shriek of terror the scoundrel stopped, and fell on his knees, uttering frantic prayers for mercy, of which Obed understood not one word. He dragged him back to the house,

S THE WORK

g to the door of the
othing words, and
he ponderous bed-
d shuffling, as of
night be dragging
ounded last. All
nent. To unlock
vith leveled pistol
e work of another

light. The scene
There were three
two who had been
hese Obed sprang.
not. The others,
the stairs, and out
They ran wildly
l, and one wretch
er in his pocket,
The distance be-
At last Obed came
nd caught him by
terror the scoun-
s, uttering frantic
d understood not
ack to the house,

found a rope in the stable, bound him securely, and put him in the dining-room. Then he went about to seek the landlord. He could not be found. Both he and his wife had apparently fled. But Obed found something else.

In a lower room that opened into the dining-room were three men on two beds, wounded, faint, and shivering with terror. These were the men that had been wounded at the first attack. In the anguish of their pain they made gestures of entreaty, of which Obed took no notice. Up stairs in the hall were those two whom he had struck with his last shots. There were no others to be seen.

After finishing his search, Obed went up the road, and carried back the man whom he had shot. He then informed his family of the result. In the midst of their horror at this tragedy, and their joy at escaping from a terrible fate, they felt a certain pity for these sufferers, wretches though they were. Obed shared this feeling. His anger had all departed with the end of the fight. He lifted one by one the wounded wretches, putting them on the beds in the rooms which he had hired. Then he and his sister dressed their wounds. Thus the night ended, and the sun at last arose.

About two hours after sunrise it happened that a troop of papal gendarmerie came along. Obed stopped them, and calmly handed over the prisoners to their care. They seemed bewildered, but took charge of them, evidently not at all comprehending the situation. An hour or so afterward the valet arrived with a fresh carriage, and after hearing Obed's story with wonder he was able to explain it to the soldiers.

Obed then set out for Rome, and, after some stay, came on to Florence.

Such was the substance of his story.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE VILLA.

THERE were many things in Obed Chute's narration which affected Lord Chetwynde profoundly. The story of that adventure in the Pontine Marshes had an interest for him which was greater than any that might be created by the magnificent prowess and indomitable pluck that had been exhibited on that occasion by the modest narrator. Beneath the careless and off-hand recital of Obed Lord Chetwynde was able to perceive the full extent of the danger to which he had been exposed, and from which his own cool courage had saved him. An ordinary man, under such circumstances, would have basely yielded; or, if the presence of his family had inspired him with unusual courage, the courage would have been at best a sort of frenzy, at the impulse of which he might have devoted his own life to the love which he had for his family, and thrown that life away without saving them. But in Obed's quiet and unpretending narrative he recognised the presence of an heroic soul; one which in the midst of the most chivalrous, the most absolute, and the most perfect devotion—in the midst of the most utter abnegation of self—could still maintain the serenest calm and the most complete presence of mind in the face of awful danger. Every point in that story produced an effect on the mind of the listener, and roused his fullest sympathy. He had before his eyes that memorable scene: Obed watching and smoking on his bed by the side of the door—the family sleeping peacefully in the adjoining room—the sound of footsteps, of violent knockings, of furious entrance, of wild and lawless mirth. He imagined the flight of the old man and his wife, who in terror, or perhaps through cunning and treachery, gave up their hotel and their guests to the fury of the brigands. He brought before his mind that long time of watchful waiting when Obed lay quietly yet vigilantly reclining on the bed, with his pipe in his mouth and his pistol in his pocket, listening to the sounds below, to see what they might foreshadow; whether they told of peace or of war, whether they announced the calm of a quiet night or the terrors of an assault made by fiends—by those Italian brigands whose name has become a horror, whose tenderest mercies are pitiless cruelty, and to fall into the hands of whom is the direst fate that man or woman may know.

One thought gave a horror to this narrative. Among the women in that room was the one who to him was infinitely dearer than any other upon earth. And this danger had threatened her—a danger too horrible to think of—one which made his very life-blood freeze in the course of this calm narration. This was the one thing on which his thoughts turned most; that horrible, that appalling danger. So fearful was it to him that he envied Obed the privilege of having saved her. He longed to have been there in Obed's place, so as to have done this thing for her. He himself had once saved her from death, and that scene could never depart from his memory; but now it seemed to him as though the fate from which he had saved her was as nothing when compared to the terror of that danger from which she had been snatched by Obed.

Yet, during Obed's narrative, although these feelings were within his heart, he said little or nothing. He listened with apparent calmness, offering no remark, though at that time the thoughts of his heart were so intense. In fact, it was through the very intensity of his feelings that he forced himself to keep silence. For if he had spoken he would have revealed all. If he had spoken he would have made known, even to the most careless or the most preoccupied listener, all the depth of that love which filled his whole being. Her very name to him was something which he could not mention without visible emotion. And she, in fearful peril, in terrific danger, in a situation so horrible, could not be spoken of by one to whom she was so dear and so precious.

And so he listened in silence, with only a casual interjection, until Obed had finished his story. Then he made some appropriate remarks, very coolly, complimentary to the heroism of his friend; which remarks were at once quietly scouted by Obed as altogether inappropriate.

"Pooh!" said he; "what was it, after all? These Italians are rubbish, at the best. They are about equal to Mexicans. You've read about our Mexican war, of course. To gain a victory over such rubbish is almost a disgrace."

So Obed spoke about it, though whether he felt his exploit to be a disgrace or not may very reasonably be doubted.

Yet, in spite of Lord Chetwynde's interest in the affair of the Pontine Marshes, there was another story of Obed's which produced a deeper effect on his mind. This was his account of his interview with Black Bill, to which he had been summoned in London. The story of Black Bill which Obed gave was one which was full of awful horror. It showed the unrelenting and pitiless cruelty of those who had made themselves her enemies; their profound genius for plotting, and their far-reaching cunning. He saw that these enemies must be full of boldness and craft far beyond what is ordinarily met with. Black Bill's account of Gualtier's behavior on the boat when the men tried to mutiny impressed him deeply. The man that could commit such a deed as he had done, and then turn upon a desperate crew as he did, to baffle them, to subdue them, and to bring them into submission to his will, seemed to him to be no common man. His flight afterward, and the easy and yet complete way in which he had eluded all his pursuers, confirmed this view of his genius. Obed himself, who had labored so long, and yet so unsuccessfully, coincided in this opinion.

The chief subject of interest in these affairs to both of these men was Zillah; yet, though the conversation revolved around her as a centre, no direct allusion was for some time made to her present situation. Yet all the while Lord Chetwynde was filled with a feverish curiosity to know where she was, whether she was still with Obed's family, or had left them; whether she was far away from him, or here in Florence. Such an immensity of happiness or of misery seemed to him at that time to depend on this thing that he did not dare to ask the question. He waited to see whether Obed himself might not put an end to this suspense. But Obed's thoughts were all absorbed by the knotty question which had been raised by the appearance of Black Bill with his story. From the London police he had received no fresh intelligence since his departure, though every day he expected to hear something. From the Marseilles authorities he had heard nothing since his last visit to that city, and a letter which he had recently dispatched to the prefect at Naples had not yet been answered. As far as his knowledge just yet was concerned, the whole thing had gone into a more impenetrable mystery than ever, and the principals in this case, after committing atrocious crimes, after baffling the police of different nations, seemed to have vanished into the profoundest obscurity. But on this occasion he reiterated that determination which he had made before of never losing sight of this purpose, but keeping at it, if need were, for years. He would write to the police, he said, perpetually, and would give information to the authorities of every country in Europe. On his return to America he would have an extensive and comprehensive search instituted. He would engage detectives himself in addition to any which the police might send forth. Above all, he intended to make free use of the newspapers. He had, he said—and in this he was a true American—great faith in advertising. He had drawn up in his mind already the formulas of various kinds of notices which he intended to have inserted in the principal papers, by which he hoped to get on the track of the criminals. Once on their track, he felt assured of success.

The unexpected addition of Black Bill to the number of actors in this important case was rightly considered by Obed as of great moment. He had some idea of seeking him out on his return to London, and of employing him in this search. Black Bill would be stimulated to such a search by something far more powerful than any mere professional instinct or any hope of reward. The vengeance which he cherished would make him go on this errand with an ardor which no other could feel. He had his own personal grievance against Gualtier. He had shown this by his long and persistent watch, and by the malignancy of his tone when speaking of his enemy. Besides this, he had more than passion or malignancy to recommend him; he had that qualification for the purpose which gave aim and certainty to all his vengeful desires. He had shown himself to have the instinct of a bloodhound, and the stealthy cunning of an Indian in following on the trail of his foe. True he had been once outwitted, but that arose from the fact that he was forced to watch, and was not ready to strike. The next time he would be ready to deal the blow, and if he were once put on the trail, and caught up with the fugitive, the blow would fall swiftly and relentlessly.

Debate about such things as these took up two or three hours, during which time Lord Chetwynde endured his suspense. At length they rose to leave the gardens, and then, as they were walking along, he said, in as indifferent a tone as he could assume:

"Oh—by-the-way—Miss Lorton is here with your family, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Obed; "she is with us still."

At this simple answer Lord Chetwynde's heart gave a great bound, and then seemed to stop beating for some seconds. He said nothing.

"She is here now in Florence with us," continued Obed. "She is quite one of the family. We all call her Ella now; she insisted on it. I have taken a villa a few miles away. Ella prefers the country. We often drive into the city. It's a wonder to me that we never met before."

"Yes; it is odd."

"She came in with us this morning with a watch, which she left at Penafrio's to be mended. It will be done this evening. She could not wait for it, so I staid, so as to take it out to her tonight. I strolled about the town, and finally wandered here, which I think the prettiest place in Florence. I'd been walking through the gardens for an hour before you saw me."

"How has she been of late?"

"Very well indeed—better, in fact, than she has ever been since I first saw her. She was not very well at Naples. The journey here did her much good, and the affair of the Pontine Marshes roused her up instead of agitating her. She behaved like a trump—she was as cool as a clock; but it was a coolness that arose from an excitement which was absolutely red-hot, Sir. She seemed strung up to a pitch ten notes higher than usual, and once or twice as I caught her eyes they seemed to me to have a deep fire in them that was stunning! I never, in all my born days, saw the equal of that little thing," exclaimed Obed, tenderly.

"It's having an occupation," he continued, "as I believe, that's done her this good. She

was afraid she would be a dependent, and the fear arose out of a noble feeling. Now she finds her position an honorable one. It gives her a fine feeling of pride. The poor little thing seems to have been brought up to do nothing at all; but now the discovery that she can do something actually intoxicates her. And the beauty of it is, she does it well. Yes, Sir. My children have been pushed along at a tremendous pace, and they love Ella better than me or sister ten times. But you'll see for yourself, for you've got to come right straight out with me, my boy. You, Windham, are the one that Ella would rather see than any other. You're the man that saved her from death, and gave her to me."

At this Lord Chetwynde's stout heart, that had never quailed in the face of death, throbbed feverishly in his intense joy, and his whole frame thrilled at the thought that arose in his mind. Going to her was easy enough, through Obed's warm friendship. And he was going to her! This was the only thought of which he was conscious.

The carriage was waiting in front of the watchmaker's shop, and the watch was ready; so they drove out without delay. It seemed to Lord Chetwynde like a dream. He was lost in anticipations of the coming meeting—that meeting which he had never dared to hope for, but which was now before him.

Obed Chute, on coming to Florence, had rented a villa on the slopes of the hills overlooking Val d'Arno. It was about twelve or fifteen miles away. The road ran through the plain, and then ascended the hills gently, in a winding direction, till it reached the place. The villa was surrounded by beautiful grounds, wherein trim gardens were seen, and fair winding walks, interspersed with fountains and statuary and pavilions. Besides these there were extensive forests of thick-growing trees, whose dense branches, interlacing overhead, threw down heavy shadows. Through these dim woods many pathways penetrated, leading to sequestered nooks and romantic grottoes. Here there wandered several little brooklets, and in the midst of the forest there was a lake, or rather a pond, from the middle of which rose a marble Triton, which perpetually spouted forth water from his shell. The villa itself was of generous dimensions, in that style which is so familiar to us in this country, with broad piazzas and wide porticoes, and no lack of statuary. Here Obed Chute had made himself quite at home, and confided to Lord Chetwynde the fact that he would prefer this to his house on the Hudson River if he could only see the Stars and Stripes floating from the Campanile at Florence. As this was not likely to happen, he was forced to look upon himself as merely a pilgrim and a sojourner.

Lord Chetwynde entered the villa. Obed remained behind for a few moments to give some directions to the servants. A lofty hall ran through the villa, with statues on each side, and a fountain at the farthest end. On either side there were doors opening into spacious apartments. Lord Chetwynde turned to the right, and entered a magnificent room, which extended the whole length of the house. He looked around, and his attention was at once arrested by a figure at the farthest end. It was a lady, whose youthful face and slender figure made his heart beat fast and furiously; for, though he could not distinguish her features, which were partly turned away, yet the shape was familiar, and was associated with the sweetest memories of his life. The lady was sitting in a half-reclining position on an Egyptian couch, her head was thrown back, a book hung listlessly in one hand, and she seemed lost in thought. So deep was her abstraction that the noise of Lord Chetwynde's steps on the marble floor did not arouse her. When he saw her he paused involuntarily, and stood for a few moments in silence.

Yes, it was *she!* One look told him this. It was the one who for so long a time had been in all his thoughts, who in his illness had been ever present to his delirious dreams. It was the one to whom his heart had never ceased to turn since that first day when that head had lain for a moment on his breast, and that rich, luxuriant hair had flowed in a sea of glory over his arms, burnished by the red rays of the rising sun. He walked softly forward and drew near. Then the noise of his footsteps roused her. She turned.

There came over her face the sudden light of joyous and rapturous wonder. In that sudden rapture she seemed to lose breath and sense. She started forward to her feet, and the book fell from her hand. For an instant she pressed her hand to her heart, and then, with both hands outstretched, and with her beautiful face all aglow with joy and delight that she could not conceal, she stepped forward. But suddenly, as though some other thought occurred, she stopped, and a crimson glow came over her pale face. She cast down her eyes and stood waiting.

Lord Chetwynde caught her outstretched hand, which still was timidly held toward him, in both of his, and said not one word. For a time neither of them spoke, but he held her hand, and she did not withdraw it.

"Oh!" he cried, suddenly, as though the words were torn from him, "how I have longed for this moment!"

She looked at him hastily and confusedly, and then withdrew her hand, while another flush swept over her face.

"Mr. Windham," she faltered, in low tones, "what an unexpected pleasure! I—I thought you were in England."

"And so I was," said Lord Chetwynde, as he devoured her with the ardent gaze of his eyes; "but my business was finished, and I left—"

"How did you find us out?" she asked, smilingly, as, once more resuming her self-possession, she sat down again upon the Egyptian sofa and picked up her book. "Have you been in correspondence with Mr. Chute?"

"No," laughed Lord Chetwynde. "It was fate that threw him into my way at the Boboli Gardens this morning. I have been here for—well, for a small eternity—and was thinking of going away when he came up, and now I am reconciled to all my past."

A silence followed, and each seemed to take a hasty glance at the other. On Zillah's face there were the traces of sorrow; its lines had grown finer, and its air more delicate and spiritual. Lord Chetwynde's face, on the other hand, showed still the marks of that disease which had brought him to death's door, and no longer had that glow of manly health which had been its characteristic at Marseilles.

"SHE SEEMED LOST IN THOUGHT."

"You have been ill," said Zillah, suddenly, and with some alarm in her voice.

"Yes," said Lord Chetwynde, sadly; "I have been as near death as it is possible for one to be and live."

"In England?"

"No; in Switzerland."

"Switzerland?"

"Yes."

"I thought that perhaps some private troubles in England had caused it," said Zillah, with tones of deep sympathy, for she recollected his last words to her, which expressed such fearful anticipations of the future.

"No; I bore all that. It was an unexpected circumstance," he said, in a cautious tone, "that caused my illness. But the Italian air has been beneficial. But *you*—how have you been? I fear that you yourself have been ill."

"I have had some troubles," Zillah replied.

Lord Chetwynde forbore to question her about those troubles. He went on to speak about the air of Val d'Arno being the best thing in the world for all illness, and congratulated her on having so beautiful a spot in which to live. Zillah grew enthusiastic in her praises of Florence and all the surrounding scenery; and as each learned how long the other had been here they wondered why they had not met.

"But I," said Zillah, "have not gone often to the city since the first week. It is so beautiful here."

"And I," said Lord Chetwynde, "have ridden all about the environs, but have never been near here before. And even if I had, I should have gone by it without knowing or suspecting that you were here."

Obed Chute had much to see about, and these two remained long together. They talked over many things. Sometimes there were long pauses, which yet were free from embarrassment. The flush on Zillah's cheek, and the kindling light of her eye, showed a pleasure which she could not conceal. Happiness was so strange to her that she welcomed eagerly this present hour, which was so bright to her poor sorrow-laden heart. Lord Chetwynde forgot his troubles, he banished the future, and, as before, he seized the present, and enjoyed it to the full.

Obed returned at last and joined them. The time fled by rapidly. Lord Chetwynde made a move to return at about eleven o'clock, but Obed would not allow him. He made him stay that night at the villa.

CHAPTER LXIII.

A CHANGE.

ALTHOUGH Lord Chetwynde was always out by day, yet he had always returned to his rooms at night, and therefore it was a matter of surprise to Hilda, on this eventful night, that twelve o'clock came without any signs of his return. In her wild and ungovernable passion her whole life had now grown to be one long internal struggle, in which it was with difficulty that she kept down the stormy feelings within her. This night she had grown more nervous than usual. It was as though she had attained to the culmination of the long excitements through which she had passed. His absence filled her with a thousand fears. The longing of her heart grew intolerable as the hours passed by without any signs of his return. Weary of calling to her servant to ask if he had come back, she at last dismissed the servant to bed, and sat herself at the door of her room, listening for the sound of footsteps. In that watchful attitude she sat, dumb and motionless; but the hours passed by her as she sat there, and still he came not.

Through those hours her mind was filled with a thousand fears and fancies. Sometimes she thought that he had been assassinated. At other times she fancied that Gualtier might have broken his promise, and come back from London, full of vengeance, to track the man whom he hated. These ideas, however, at length left her, and another took possession of her, which was far more natural and probable, and which finally became a deep and immovable conviction. She thought that Lord Chetwynde had at last yielded to his aversion; and unwilling, from motives of gratitude, to have any formal farewell, he had concluded to leave her abruptly.

"Yes," she said to herself, as this thought first came to her, "that is it. He wearies of my perpetual presence. He does not wish to subject himself to my mean entreaties. He has cut the connection abruptly, and is this night on his way to Leghorn to take the steamer. He has gone to India, and left me forever. To-morrow, no doubt, I shall get a letter acquainting me with the irrevocable step, and bidding me an eternal farewell."

The more she thought of this the more intense her conviction became, until at last, from the force of her own fancies, she became as certain of this as though some one had actually told her of his departure. Then there came over her a mighty sense of desolation. What should she do now? Life seemed in that instant to have lost all its sweetness and its meaning. Again there came to her that thought which many times during the last few weeks had occurred, and now had grown familiar—the awful thought of suicide. The life she lived had already grown almost intolerable from its unfulfilled wishes, and its longings against hope; but now the last hope had departed, and life itself was nothing but a burden. Should she not lay it down?

So the night passed, and the morning came, but through all that night sleep came not. And the dawn came, and the hours of the day passed by, but she sat motionless. The servants came, but were sent away; and this woman of feeling and of passion, who once had risen superior to all feeling, now lay a prey to an agony of soul that threatened reason and life itself.

But suddenly all this was brought to an end. At about mid-day Lord Chetwynde returned. Hilda heard his footstep and his voice. A great joy darted through her, and her first impulse was to fling herself upon him, and weep tears of happiness upon his breast. But that was a thing which was denied her—a privilege which might never be hers. After the first wild impulse and the first rush of joy she restrained herself, and, locking the door of her room, she sat listening with quick and heavy breathing. She heard him speak a few careless words to the servant. She heard him go to his room, where he staid for about an hour. She watched and waited, but restrained every impulse to go out. "I have tormented him too much," she said to herself. "I have forced myself upon him; I have made myself common. A greater delicacy and a more retiring habit will be more agreeable to him. Let me not destroy my present happiness. It is joy enough that my fears are dispersed, and that he has not yet left me." So she restrained herself—though that self-restraint was the mightest task which she had ever undertaken—and sat passively listening, when every feeling prompted her to rush forth eagerly to greet him.

He went away that day, and came back by midnight. Hilda did not trouble him, and they met on the following morning.

Now, at the first glance which she stole at him, she noted in him a wonderful change. His face had lost its gloom; there was an expression of peace and blissful tranquillity which she had never observed before, and which she had never thought possible to one who had appeared to her as he always had. She sat wondering as they waited for breakfast to be served—a meal which they generally took together—and baffled herself in vain conjectures. A great change had certainly come over him. He greeted her with a bright and genial smile. He had shaken her hand with the warm pressure of a good-hearted friend. He was sprightly even with the servants. He noticed the exquisite beauty of the day. He had something to say about many little trifles. Even in his best moods, during the journey, he had never been like this. Then he had never been otherwise than reserved and self-contained; his face had never altogether lost its cloud of care. Now there was not a vestige of care to be seen; he was joyous; he was even hilarious; and seemed at peace with himself and all the world.

What had happened?

This was the question which Hilda incessantly asked herself. It needed something unusual to change so completely this strong nature, and transform the sadness which had filled it into peace and joy. What had happened? What thing, of what kind, would be necessary to effect such a change? Could it be gratified vengeance? [illegible] the feeling was too light for that. Was it the news of some sudden fortune? She did not believe that if Lord Chetwynde heard that he had inherited millions it would give such joy as this, which would make itself manifest in all his looks and words and acts and tones. What would be needed to produce such a change in herself? Would vengeance, or riches, or honor

be sufficient? No. One thing alone could do this. Were she, by any possibility, ever to gain Lord Chetwynde to herself, then she felt that she would know the same sweet peace and calm joy as that which she now read in his face. In that event she thought that she could look upon her worst enemy with a smile. But in him what could it mean? Could it be possible that he had any one whose smile would bring him such peace as this? Once before she suspected that he loved another. Could it be within the bounds of possibility that the one whom he loved lived in Florence?

This thought filled her with dismay. And yet, why not? Had he not set out from England for Italy? Had he not dragged himself out of his sick-room, almost before he could walk, to pursue his journey? Had he not broken off almost all intercourse with herself after the first week of their arrival? Had he not been occupied with some engrossing business all the time since then? What business could have at once so occupied him and so changed him, if it were not something of this kind? There was one thing which could at once account for his coolness to her and his inaccessibility to her advances, for his journey to Florence, for his occupation all the time, and now for this strange mood of happiness which had come so suddenly yet so gently over him. And that one thing, which alone, to her mind, could at once account for all these things, was Love.

The time passed, and Lord Chetwynde's new mood seemed lasting. Never had he been so considerate, so gentle, and so kind to Hilda. At any other time, or under any other circumstances, this change would have stimulated her mind to the wildest hopes; but now it prompted fears which filled her with despair. So, as the days passed, the struggle raged within her breast.

Meanwhile Lord Chetwynde was a constant visitor at the villa of Obed Chute, and a welcome guest to all. As the days passed the constant association which he had with Zillah made each better known to the other than ever before. The tenderness that existed between them was repressed in the presence of the others; but on the frequent occasions when they were left alone together it found expression by acts if not by words, by looks if not by acts. Lord Chetwynde could not forget that first look of all-absorbing and overwhelming joy with which Zillah had greeted him on his sudden appearance. A master, to a certain extent, over himself, he coerced himself so far as not to alarm Zillah by any tender words or by any acts which told too much; yet in his face and in his eyes she could read, if she chose, all his devotion. As for Zillah, the change which she had felt from the dull monotony of her past to the vivid joy of the present was so great and so powerful that its effects were too manifest to be concealed. She could not conceal the glow of health that sprang to her cheek, the light that kindled in her eye, the resonant tone that was added to her voice, and the spring that came to her step. Nor could she, in her girlish innocence, conceal altogether how completely she now rested all her hopes and all her happiness upon Lord Chetwynde; the flush of joy that arose at his arrival, the sadness that overspread her at his departure. But Obed Chute and his sister were not observant; and these things, which would have been so manifest to others, were never noticed by them. It seemed to both of them as though Zillah merely shared the pleasure which they felt in the society of this Windham, whom Obed loved and admired, and they thought that Zillah's feelings were merely of the same character as their own.

Neither Lord Chetwynde nor Zillah cared to disclose the true state of the case. Lord Chetwynde wished to see her every day, but did not wish them to know that he came every day. That might seem strange to them. In point of fact, they would have thought nothing of it, but would have welcomed him as warmly as ever; but Lord Chetwynde could not feel sure of this. And if he visited her every day, he did not wish to let the world know it. How it happened can not be told; by what mysterious process it occurred can scarcely be related; such a process is too indefinable for description; but certain it is that a mysterious understanding sprang up between him and Zillah, so that on every alternate day when he rode toward the villa he would leave his horse at a house about a quarter of a mile away, and walk to the nearest part of the park, where there was a small gate among the trees. Here he usually entered, and soon reached a small kiosk near that pond among the woods which has already been spoken of. The household was so small and so quiet, and the woods were so unfrequented and so shadowy, that there was scarcely any possibility of interruption. Even if they had been discovered there by Obed himself, Lord Chetwynde's presence of mind could have readily furnished a satisfactory story to account for it. He had already arranged that in his mind. He would have "happened to meet" Zillah on the road near the gate, and come in here with her. By this it will be seen, on the strength of this mysterious understanding, that Zillah was not averse to this clandestine meeting. In fact, she always was there. Many times they met there in the weeks which Lord Chetwynde passed in Florence, and never once did she fail to be there first to await him.

Perhaps it was because each had a secret belief that this was all temporary—a happiness, a bliss, in fact, in this part of their mortal lives, but a bliss too great to last. Perhaps it was this that gave Zillah the courage and spirit to be at the trysting-place to receive this man who adored her, and never to fail to be there first—to think that not to be there first would be almost a sin—and so to receive his deep and fervent expressions of gratitude for her kindness, which were reiterated at every meeting. At any rate, Zillah was always there on the days when Lord Chetwynde wished her to be there; and on the occasions when he visited the villa she was not there, but was seated in the drawing-room to receive him. Obed Chute thought that Lord Chetwynde came three times a week. Zillah knew that he came seven times a week.

For some time this state of things had continued. Windham was the chosen friend of Obed, and the favored guest at Obed's villa. Zillah knew that this could not last, and used to try to check her happiness, and reason it down. But as the hour of the tryst approached all attempts of this kind were forgotten, and she was there watching and waiting.

To her, one day thus waiting, Lord Chetwynde

came with a sad smile on his face, and something in his eyes which threw a chill over Zillah's heart. They talked a little while, but Lord Chetwynde was melancholy and preoccupied.

"You do not look well to-day," said Zillah, wonderingly, and in tones which were full of sympathy. "I hope nothing has happened?"

Lord Chetwynde looked earnestly at her and sighed heavily.

"Miss Lorton," said he, sadly, "something has happened which has thrown the deepest gloom over me. Shall I tell you? Will you sympathize with my gloom? I will tell you. I have this day received a letter giving me my appointment to a post in India, for which I have been waiting for a long time."

"India!"

Zillah gasped this out with white lips, while her face assumed the ashen hue of despair.

"India!" she repeated, as her great eyes were fixed in agony upon him; and then she stopped, pressing her hand to her heart.

The anguish of that look was so intense that Lord Chetwynde was shaken to the soul. He caught her hand in his, scarce knowing what he did.

"Oh, Miss Lorton," he cried, "do not look so at me. I am in despair; I am heart-broken; I dare not look at the future; but the future is not immediate; I can yet wait a few weeks; and you will still come here, will you not—to see me?"

Zillah caught her hand away, and her eyes fell. Tears dropped from beneath her heavy lashes. But she said not a word.

"At any rate, tell me this," cried Lord Chetwynde, "when I am gone, Miss Lorton, you will not forget me? Tell me this."

Zillah looked at him with her large, spiritual eyes, whose fire seemed now to burn into his soul, and her lips moved:

"Never!"

That was the only word that she said.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE MASQUERADE.

Obed Chute came home one day full of news, and particularly dilated upon the grandeur of a masquerade ball which was to take place at the Villa Rinalci. He wished to go, and to take Zillah. The idea filled all his mind, and his excitement was speedily communicated to Zillah, and to Lord Chetwynde, who happened to be there at the time. Obed had learned that it was to be conducted with the highest degree of magnificence. He had talked about it with some Americans with whom he had met in the café, and, as he had never seen one, he was eager to go. Lord Chetwynde expressed the same desire, and Zillah at once showed a girlish enthusiasm that was most gratifying to Obed. It was soon decided that they all should go. A long conversation followed about the dresses, and each one selected what commended itself as the most agreeable or becoming. Obed intended to dress as a Western trapper, Zillah as an Athenian maid of the classic days, while Lord Chetwynde decided upon the costume of the Cavaliers. A merry evening was spent in settling upon these details, for the costume of each one was subjected to the criticism of the others, and much laughter arose over the various suggestions that were made from time to time about the best costume.

For some days Lord Chetwynde busied himself about his costume. He had to have it made especially for the occasion, and tailors had to be seen, and measurements had to be taken. Of course this did not interfere in the smallest degree with his constant attendance upon Zillah, for every day he was punctual at the trysting-place or in the villa.

Meanwhile Hilda's intolerable anxiety had taken another and a very natural turn. She began to feel intensely curious about the object of Lord Chetwynde's daily occupations. Having once come to the conclusion that there was a woman in the case, every hour only strengthened this conviction, until at length it was as firmly fixed in her mind as the belief in her own existence. The pangs of jealousy which she suffered from this cause were as extreme as those which she had suffered before from fear, or anxiety, or suspense, both when hurrying on to save Lord Chetwynde, and when watching at his bedside. In her wild, ungovernable passion and her uncontrollable love she felt the same vehement jealousy which a betrothed mistress might feel, and the same unreasoning indignation which a true and lawful wife might have when suspecting a husband's perfidy. Such feelings filled her with an insatiable desire to learn what might be his secret, and to find out at all costs who this one might be of whose existence she now felt confident. Behind this desire there lay an implacable resolve to take vengeance in some way upon her, and the discovery of her in Hilda's mind was only synonymous with the deadly vengeance which she would wreak upon this destroyer of her peace.

It was difficult, however, to accomplish such a desire. Little or nothing could be found out from the servants, nor was there any one whom she could employ to observe her "husband's" actions. Now she began to feel the need of that deep devotion and matchless fidelity which she had once received from Gualtier. But he was far away. Could she not send for him? She thought of this often, but still delayed to do so. She felt sure that the moment she gave the command he would leave every thing and come to do her bidding. But she hesitated. Even in her unscrupulous mind there was a perception of the fitness of things, and she was slow to call to her assistance the aid of the man who so deeply loved her, when her purpose was to remove or to punish her rival in the affections of another man, or rather an obstacle in the way of securing his affections. Deprived thus of all aid, it was difficult for her to find out any thing.

At length Lord Chetwynde became interested in the affair of the masquerade. The state of mind into which he had fallen ever since the discovery of Zillah had deprived him of that constant reticence which used to be his characteristic. He was now pleasant and genial and talkative. This change had inspired alarm in Hilda rather than joy, and she had considered this the chief reason for believing that love was the animating motive with him now. After the masquerade had been mentioned he himself spoke about it. In the fullness of his joy it slipped from him incidentally in the course of conversation,

and Hilda, after wondering why he should mention such a thing, began to wonder what interest the thing might have to him. No doubt he was going. Of that she felt assured. If so, the mysterious being to whom she believed he was devoted would necessarily be there too. She believed that the expectation of being there with her had so intoxicated him that this masquerade was the chief thing in his thoughts, and therefore he had made mention of it. So she watched to find out the meaning of this.

One day a parcel came for Lord Chetwynde. The servants were out of sight, and she opened it. It was a suit of clothes in the Cavalier fashion, with every accessory necessary to make up the costume. The meaning of this was at once evident to her. He was going to this masquerade as a Cavalier. What then? This discovery at once made plain before her all that she might do. Under these circumstances it would be possible for her to follow and to track him. Perhaps her own good fortune and cleverness might enable her to discover the one to whom he was devoted. But a complete disguise was necessary for herself. She was not long in choosing such a disguise. She decided upon the costume of the *Compagnia della Misericordia*—one which was eminently Florentine, and, at the same time, better adapted for purposes of concealment than any other could possibly be. It consists of a black robe with a girdle, and a hood thrown over the head in such a way as to show only the eyes. It would be as suitable a disguise for a woman as for a man, and would give no possible chance of recognition. At the same time, belonging as it did to that famous Florentine society, it would be recognized by all, and while insuring a complete disguise, would excite no comment.

Lord Chetwynde left early on the morning of the fête, taking his costume with him, showing Hilda that he was evidently going in company with others. It was with great impatience that she waited the progress of the hours; and when, at length, the time came, and she was deposited at the gate of the Villa Rinalci, her agitation was excessive. Entering here, she found the grounds illuminated.

They were extensive, and filled with groves and spacious avenues and dashing fountains and beautiful sculptures. Already a large crowd had assembled, and Hilda walked among them, watching on every side for the man whom she sought. In so large a place as this, where the grounds were so extensive, it was difficult indeed to find any particular person, and two hours passed away in a vain search. But she was patient and determined, and there was but one idea in her mind. The music and the gayety of the assembled throng did not for one moment divert her, though this was the first scene of the kind that she had ever beheld, and its novelty might well have attracted her attention. The lights which flashed out so brightly through the gloom of night—the noisy crowds which thronged every where—the foaming spray that danced upward from the fountains, gleaming in the light of the lamps—the thousand scenes of mirth and revelry that arose on every side—all these had no attraction for this woman, who had come here for one purpose only, and who carried this purpose deep in her heart. The company wore every imaginable attire. Most of them were in masks, but some of them had none; while Hilda, in her mournful robe, that spoke to all of death and funereal rites, was alone in the singularity of her costume.

She wandered throughout all the grounds, and through the villa itself, in search of one thing, but that one thing she could not find. At length her weary feet refused to support her any longer in what seemed a hopeless search, and she sat down near one of the fountains in the central avenue, and gave herself up to despondent thoughts.

About half an hour passed, when suddenly two figures approached that riveted her attention. They were a man and a woman. Her heart beat fast. There was no mistake about the man. His dress was the dress which she herself had seen and examined. He wore a domino, but beneath it could be seen his whiskers, cut after the English fashion, and long and pendent. But Hilda knew that face so familiarly that there was no doubt in her mind, although she only saw the lower portion. And a woman was with him, resting on his arm. They passed by her in silence. Hilda waited till they had gone by, and then arose and followed stealthily. Now had come the time for discovery, perhaps for vengeance. In her wild impulse she had brought a dagger with her, which she had secreted in her breast. As she followed her hand played mechanically with the hilt of this dagger. It was on this that she had instinctively placed her ultimate resolve. They walked on swiftly, but neither of them turned to see whether they were followed or not. The idea of such a thing never seemed to have entered into the mind of either of them. After a time they left the avenue, and turned into a side-path; and, following its course, they went onward to the more remote parts of the grounds. Here there were but few people, and these grew fewer as they went on. At length they came to the end of this path, and turned to the right. Hilda hurried onward stealthily, and, turning, saw an arbor embowered among the trees. Near by was a light, which hung from the branch of a tree on one side. She heard low voices, and knew that they had gone into the arbor. She crept up [illegible] not close to it—so close, indeed, that [illegible] sitting at the back, had but a few inches between themselves and this listener. The rays of the lantern shone in, so that Hilda could see, as they sat between her and the light, the outlines of their forms. But that light was obstructed by the leaves that clung to the arbor, and in the shadow their features were invisible. Two dark figures were before her, and that was all.

"We can stay here alone for some time," said Lord Chetwynde, after a long silence. He spoke in a whisper, which, however, was perfectly audible to Hilda.

"Yes," said the other, speaking in the same whisper. "He is amusing himself in the Grand Avenue."

"And we have an hour, at least, to ourselves. We are to meet him at the Grand Fountain. He will wait for us."

There was another silence.

Hilda heard this with strange feelings. Who was this *he* of whom they spoke? Was he the husband of this woman? Of course. There was no other explanation. They could not be so cautious and so regardful about any other. Nor, in-

deed, did the thought of any other come into her mind in that hour of excitement. She thought that she could understand it all. Could she but find out this woman's name, then it would be possible to take vengeance in a better and less dangerous way than by using the dagger. She could find out this injured husband, and use him as an instrument for vengeance. And, as this thought came to her, she sheathed her dagger.

The conversation began again. As before, it was in a whisper.

"We are secluded here. No one can see us. It is as quiet as our kiosk at the villa."

"Heavens!" thought Hilda. "A trysting-place!"

A sigh escaped the other.

"You are sighing," said Lord Chetwynde. "Are you unhappy?"

"I'm only too happy; but I—I—I'm thinking of the future."

"Don't think of the future. The present is our only concern. When I think of the future, I feel as though I should go mad. The future! My God! Let me banish it from my thoughts. Help me to forget it. You alone can!"

And even in that whisper, which reached Hilda's ears, there was an impassioned and infinite tenderness which pierced her heart.

"Oh God!" she thought, "how he loves her! And I—what hope have I?"

"What blessed fortune was it," resumed Lord Chetwynde, "that led me to you here in Florence—that brought us both here to this one place, and threw us again into one another's society? When I left you at Marseilles I thought that I had lost you forever!"

The lady said nothing.

But Hilda had already learned this much—first, that both were English. The lady, even in her whisper, showed this. Again, she learned that they had met before, and had enjoyed one another's society in this way. Where? At Marseilles. Her vivid imagination at once brought before her a way in which this might have been done. She was traveling with her husband, and Lord Chetwynde had met her. Probably they had sailed in the same steamer. Possibly they had come all the way from India together. This now became her conviction.

"Have you forgotten Marseilles?" continued Lord Chetwynde. "Do you remember our last sail? do you remember our last ride?"

"Yes," sighed the lady.

"And do you remember what I said?"

"I have not forgotten."

There was a long silence.

"This can not last much longer," said Lord Chetwynde. "I must go to India."

He stopped.

The lady's head sank forward. Hilda could see this through the shadows of the foliage.

"It can not last much longer," said Lord Chetwynde, in a louder voice, and a groan escaped him as he spoke. "I must leave you; I must leave you forever!"

He paused, and folding his arms, leaned back, while Hilda saw that his frame was shaken with extraordinary excitement. At length he leaned forward again. He caught her hand and held it. The lady sat motionless, nor did she attempt to withdraw her hand. They sat in perfect silence for a long time, but the deep breathing of each, which seemed like long-drawn sighs, was audible to Hilda, as she listened there; and it told how strong was the emotion within them. But the one who listened was the prey of an emotion as mighty as theirs.

Neither of these three was conscious of time. Wrapped up in their own feelings, they were overwhelmed by a tide of passion that made them oblivious of all things else. There were the lovers, and there was the vigilant watcher; but which of these three was a prey to the strongest emotion it would be difficult to tell. On the one side was the mighty power of love; on the other the dread force of hate. Tenderness dwelt here; vengeance waited there. Close together were these three, but while Hilda heard even the very breathing of the lovers, they were unconscious of her presence, and heard not the beating of that baleful heart, which now, filled with quenchless hate, throbbed vehemently and rapidly in the fury of the hour.

Unconscious of all else, and oblivious of the outer world—and why? They loved. Enough. Each knew the love of the other, though no words had spoken it.

"Oh, my friend!" suddenly exclaimed Lord Chetwynde, in a voice which was low and deep and full of passion—a voice which was his own, and no longer a whisper—"Oh, my friend! my beloved! forgive my words; forgive my wildness, my passion; forgive my love. It is agony to me when I know that I must lose you. Soon we must part; I must go, my beloved! my own! I must go to the other end of the earth, and never, never, never more can we hope to meet again. How can I give you up? There is a gulf between us that divides you from me. How can I live without you?"

These words poured forth from him in passionate impetuosity—burning words they were, and the lady whose hand he clasped seemed to quiver and tremble in sympathy with their meaning. He clung to her hand. Every moment deprived him more and more of that self-restraint and that profound consideration for her which he had so long maintained. Never before had he so forgotten himself as to speak words like these. But now separation was near, and she was alone with him, and the hour and the opportunity were his.

"I can not give you up. My life without you is intolerable," he groaned. "God knows how I have struggled against this. You know how faithfully I have kept a guard over my words and acts. But now my longing overmasters me. My future is like hell without you. Oh, love! oh, Ella! listen to me! Can you give me up? Will you be willing to do wrong for my sake? *Will you come with me?*"

A deep silence followed, broken by a sob from the lady.

"You are mine! you are mine!" he cried. "Do not let me go away into desolation and despair. Come with me. We will fly to India. We will be happy there through life. We will forget all the miseries that we have known in the great joy that we will have in one another's presence. Say that you will. See! I give up every thing; I throw all considerations to the winds. I trample even on *honor* and *duty* for your sake. Come with me!"

He paused, breathless from the terrible emo-

tion that had now overpowered him. The lady trembled. She tried to withdraw her hand, but he clung to it. She staggered to her feet, and stood trembling.

"Oh!" she faltered, "do not tempt me! I am weak. I am nothing. Do not; do not!"

"Tempt you? No, no!" cried Lord Chetwynde, feverishly. "Do not say so. I ask you only to save me from despair."

He rose to his feet as he said this, and stood by her, still holding that hand which he would not relinquish. And the one who watched them in her agony saw an anguish as intense as hers in that quivering frame which half shrank away from Lord Chetwynde, and half advanced toward him; in those hands, one of which was held in his, while the other was clasped to her heart; and in Lord Chetwynde himself, who, though he stood there before her, yet stood trembling from head to foot in the frightful agitation of the hour. All this Hilda saw, and as she saw it she learned this—that all the hopes which she had ever formed of winning this man to herself were futile and baseless and impossible. In that moment they faded away; and what was left? What? Vengeance!

Suddenly Lord Chetwynde roused himself from the struggle that raged within him. It was as though he had resolved to put an end to all these conflicts with himself. He dragged Zillah toward him. Wildly and madly he seized her. He flung his arms about her, and pressed her to his heart.

"My love! my darling!" he exclaimed, in low tones that were broken, and scarce audible in the intensity of his emotion, "you can not—you will not—you dare not refuse me!"

Zillah at first was overwhelmed by this sudden outburst. But soon, by a mighty effort, she seemed to gain control over herself. She tore herself away, and staggered back a few paces.

"Spare me!" she gasped. "Have pity! have mercy! If you love me, I implore you by your love to be merciful! I am so weak. As you hope for heaven, spare me!"

She was trembling violently, and her words were scarcely coherent. At the deep and piteous entreaty of her voice Lord Chetwynde's heart was touched. With a violent effort he seemed to regain his self-control. A moment before he had been possessed of a wild, ungovernable passion, which swept all things away. But now this was succeeded by a calm, and he stood for a time silent.

"You will forgive me," he said at last, sadly, "You are more noble than I am. You do right to refuse me. My request seems to you like madness. Yes, you are right to refuse, even though I go into despair. But listen, and you will see how it is. I love you, but can never win you, for there is a gulf between us. You may have suspected—I am married already! Between us there stands one who keeps us forever asunder; *and — that — one — I — hate — worse — than — death!*"

He spoke these last words slowly, and with a savage emphasis, into which all the intensity of his love had sent an indescribable bitterness.

And there was one who heard those words, in whose ears they rang like a death-knell; one crouched behind among the shrubbery, whose hands clung to the lattice of the arbor; who, though secure in her concealment, could scarcely hide the anguish which raged within her. At these words the anguish burst forth. A groan escaped her, and all her senses seemed to fail in that moment of agony.

Zillah gave a cry.

"What was that? Did you hear it?" she exclaimed, catching Lord Chetwynde's arm.

Lord Chetwynde had heard it also.

"It's nothing," said he, after listening for a moment. "Perhaps it's one of the deer."

"I'm afraid," said Zillah.

"Afraid! Am not *I* with you?"

"Let us go," murmured Zillah. "The place is dreadful; I can scarcely breathe."

"Take off your mask," said Lord Chetwynde; and with trembling hands he assisted her to remove it. His tone and manner reassured her. She began to think that the sound was nothing after all. Lord Chetwynde himself thought but little of it. His own excitement had been so intense that every thing else was disregarded. He saw that she was alarmed, but attributed this to the excitement which she had undergone. He now did his best to soothe her, and in his newfound calm he threw away that impetuosity which had so overpowered her. At last she regained something like her former self-possession.

"We must go back," said he at length. "Wait here a few moments, and I will go up the path a short distance to see if the way is clear."

He went out, and went, as he said, a little distance up the path.

Scarcely had his footsteps died out in the distance when Zillah heard a noise directly behind her. She started. In her agitated state she was a prey to any feeling, and a terror crept over her. She hastened out with the intention of following Lord Chetwynde.

The figure, crouching low behind the arbor, had seen Lord Chetwynde's departure. Now her time had come—the time for vengeance! His bitter words had destroyed all hope, and all of that patient cunning which she might otherwise have observed. Blind with rage and passion, there was only one thought in her mind, and that was instant and immediate vengeance. She caught her dagger in her hand, and strode out upon her victim.

The light which hung from the branch of the tree shone upon the arbor. The back-ground was gloomy in the dense shadow, while the intervening space was illumined. Hilda took a few quick paces, clutching her dagger, and in a moment she reached the place. But in that instant she beheld a sight which sent through her a pang of sudden horror—so sharp, so intense, and accompanied by so dread a fear, that she seemed to turn to stone as she gazed.

It was a slender figure, clothed in white, with a white mantle gathered close about the throat, and flowing down. The face was white, and in this dim light, defined against the dark back-ground of trees, it seemed like the face of the dead. The eyes—large, lustrous, burning—were fixed on her, and seemed filled with consuming fire as they fastened themselves on her. The dark hair hung down in vast voluminous folds, and by its contrast added to the marble whiteness of that face. And that face! It was a face which was never absent from her thoughts,

"SHE BEHELD A SIGHT WHICH SENT THROUGH HER A PANG OF HORROR."

a face which haunted her dreams—the face of her victim—the face of Zillah!

Hilda had only one thought, and that was this, that the sea had given up its dead, and that her victim had come to confront her now; in the hour of vengeance to stand between her and another victim. It was but for an instant that she stood, yet in that instant a thousand thoughts swept through her mind. But for an instant; and then, with a loud, piercing shriek, she leaped back, and with a thrill of mortal terror plunged into the thick wood and fled afar—fled with the

feeling that the avenger was following fast after her.

The shriek roused Lord Chetwynde. He rushed back. Zillah had fainted, and was lying senseless on the grass. He raised her in his arms, and held her pressed convulsively to his heart, looking with unutterable longing upon her pale face, and pressing his burning lips to her cold brow. There was a great terror in his heart, for he could not think what it might be that had happened, and he feared that some sudden alarm had done this. Bitterly he reproached himself for so agitating her. He had excited her with his despair; and she, in her agitation, had become an easy prey to any sudden fear. Something had happened, he could not tell what, but he feared that he had been to some extent the cause, by the agitation which he had excited within her. All these thoughts and fears were in his mind as he held her upraised in his arms, and looked wildly around for some means of restoring her. A fountain was playing not far away, under the trees, and the babble of running water came to his ears amidst the deep stillness. There he carried his precious burden, and dashed water in her face, and chafed her hands, and murmured all the time a thousand words of love and tenderness. To him, in his intense anxiety, the moments seemed hours, and the passage of every moment threw him into despair. But at last she revived, and finally opened her eyes to see the face of Lord Chetwynde bending over her.

"Thank God!" he murmured, as her opening eyes met his.

"Do not leave me!" moaned Zillah. "*It* may come again, and if it does I shall die!"

"Leave you!" said Lord Chetwynde; and then he said nothing more, but pressed her hand in silence.

After a few moments she arose, and leaning heavily on his arm she walked with him up the path toward the fountain. On the way, with many starts and shudders of sudden fear, she told him what had happened. She had heard a noise among the trees, and had hurried out, when suddenly a figure rushed up to her—an awful figure! It wore a black robe, and over its head was a cowl with two holes for the eyes. This figure waved its arms wildly, and finally gave a long, wild yell, which pierced to her heart. She fell senseless. Never while life lasts, she said, would she be able to forget that abhorrent cry.

Lord Chetwynde listened eagerly.

"That dress," he said, "is the costume of a Florentine society that devotes itself to the burial of the dead. Some one has worn it here. I'm afraid we have been watched. It looks like it."

"Watched! who could think of such a thing?"

"I don't know," said Lord Chetwynde, thoughtfully. "It may have been accidental. Some masker has watched us, and has tried to frighten you. That is all. If I thought that we could have any enemy, I would say that it was his work. But that is impossible. We are unknown here. At any rate, you must not think that there has been any thing supernatural about it. It seems to me," he concluded, "that we have been mistaken for some others."

This way of accounting for it served to quiet Zillah's fears, and by the time that they reached the fountain she was more calm. Obed Chute was waiting there, and as she pleaded fatigue, he at once had the carriage ordered.

CHAPTER LXV.

HILDA'S DECISION.

HILDA fled, and continued long in that frantic flight through the thick woods. As the branches of the underbrush crackled behind her, it seemed to her that it was the noise of pursuit, and the horror of that unexpected vision was before her, for to face it again seemed to her worse than death. She was strong of soul naturally; her nerves were not such as give way beneath the pressure of imagination; she was not a woman who was in any degree liable to the ordinary weaknesses of a woman's nature; but the last few months had opened new feelings within her, and under the assault of those fierce, resistless feelings the strength of her nature had given way. Even had she possessed all her old strength, the sight of this unparalleled apparition might have overwhelmed her, but as it was, it seemed to make her insane. Already shaken to her inmost soul by long suffering and wild alternations of feeling, she had that night attained the depths of despair in those words which she had overheard. Immediately upon that there came the direful phantom, which she felt that she could not look upon and live. That face seemed to burn itself into her mind. It was before her as she fled, and a great horror thrilled through her, driving her onward blindly and wildly, until at last nature itself gave way, and she fell shrieking with terror.

Then sense left her.

How long she lay she knew not. There was no one near to bring back the lost sense. She awaked shuddering. She had never fainted thus before, and it seemed to her now as though she had died and risen again to the sadness of life. Around her were the solemn forest trees. The wind sighed through their branches. The sun was almost at the meridian. It was not midnight when she fainted. It was mid-day almost when she recovered. There was a sore pain at her heart; all her limbs seemed full of bruises; but she dragged herself to a little opening in the trees where the rays of the sun came down, and there the sun's rays warmed her once more into life. There, as she sat, she recalled the events of the night. The horror had passed, and she no longer had that awful sense of a pursuing phantom; but there remained the belief, fixed within her soul, that she had seen the form of the dead. She was not superstitious, but in this instance the sight, and the effects of that sight, had been so tremendous that she could not reason them away.

She tried to dismiss these thoughts. What was she to do? She knew not. And now as she thought there came back to her the remembrance of Lord Chetwynde's words, and the utterance of his hate. This recollection rose up above the remembrance of her terrors, and gave her something else for thought. What should she do? Should she give up her purpose and return to England? This seemed to her intolerable. Chetwynde Castle had no attractions;

and even if she were now assured beyond all doubt that she should be for all the rest of her life the acknowledged mistress of Chetwynde—even if the coronet were fixed on her brow beyond the chance of removal—even if the court and the aristocracy of England were eager to receive her into their midst—yet even then she found in these things nothing which could alleviate her grief, and nothing which could afford any attraction. Her life was now penetrated with one idea, and that idea was all set upon Lord Chetwynde. If he was lost to her, then there was only one of two alternatives—death to herself, or vengeance. Could she die? Not yet. From that she turned, not in fear, but rather from a feeling that something yet remained to be done. And now, out of all her thoughts and feelings, the idea of vengeance rose up fiercely and irresistibly. It returned with something of that vehemence which had marked its presence on the previous night, when she rushed forth to satisfy it, but was so fearfully arrested. But how could she now act? She felt as though the effort after vengeance would draw her once more to confront the thing of horror which she had already met with. Could she face it again?

Amidst all these thoughts there came to her the memory of Gualtier. He was yet faithful, she believed, and ready to act for her in any way, even if it required the sacrifice of his own life. To him she could now turn. He could now do what she could not. If she had him once more to act as her right hand, she might use him as a means for observation and for vengeance. She felt now most keenly her own weakness, and longed with a weary sense of desolation for some one who might assist her, and do this work which lay before her.

At last she rose to go. The warmth of the sun had restored something of her strength. The new resolutions which she had formed had given energy to her soul. She wandered about through the wood, and at length reached a stone-wall. It looked like the boundary of the villa. She followed this for some distance, expecting to reach the gate, and at length came to a place where a rock arose by the side of the wall. Going up to the top of this, she looked over the wall, and saw the public road on the other side, with Florence in the distance. She saw pretty nearly where she was, and knew that this was the nearest point to her lodgings. To go back to the chief entrance would require a long detour. It would also excite surprise. One in her peculiar costume, on going out of the grounds, might be questioned; she thought it better to avoid this. She looked up and down the road, and seeing no one coming, she stepped to the top of the wall and let herself down on the opposite side. In a few moments she was on the road, on her way back to Florence. Reaching the city, she at once went to the hotel, and arrived at her rooms without observation.

That same day she sent off an urgent letter to Gualtier, asking him to come to Florence at once.

After this excitement she kept her bed for a few days. Lord Chetwynde heard that she was ill without expressing any emotion. When at length he saw her he spoke in his usual courteous manner, and expressed his pleasure at seeing her again. But these empty words, which used to excite so much hope within her, now fell indifferently on her ears. She had made up her mind now. She knew that there was no hope. She had called to her side the minister of her vengeance. Lord Chetwynde saw her pale face and downcast eyes, but did not trouble himself to search into the cause of this new change in her. She seemed to be growing indifferent to him, he thought; but the change concerned him little. There was another in his heart, and all his thoughts were centered on that other.

After the masquerade Lord Chetwynde had hurried out to the villa, on the following day, to make inquiries about her health. He found Zillah still much shaken, and exhibiting sufficient weakness to excite his anxiety. Which of the many causes that she had for agitation and trouble might now be disturbing her he could not tell, but he sought to alleviate her troubles as much as possible. His departure for India had to be postponed, for how could he leave her in such a state? Indeed, as long as Obed Chute remained in Florence he did not see how he could leave for India at all.

CHAPTER LXVI.

FAITHFUL STILL.

When Hilda sent off her note to Gualtier she felt certain that he would come to her aid. All that had passed between them had not shaken the confidence which she felt in his willingness to assist her in a thing like this. She understood his feelings so perfectly that she saw in this purpose which she offered him something which would be more agreeable to him than any other, and all that he had ever expressed to her of his feelings strengthened this view. Even his attempts to gain the mastery over her, his coercion by which he forced from her that memorable promise, his rage and his menaces at Lausanne, were so many proofs of his love for her and his malignant hate to Lord Chetwynde. The love which she had once despised while she made use of it she now called to her aid, so as to make use of it again, not thinking of what the reward would be which he would claim, not caring what his hope might be, indifferent to whatever the future might now reveal, and intent only upon securing in the best and quickest way the accomplishment of her own vengeful desires.

This confidence which she felt in Gualtier was not unfounded, nor was her hope disappointed. In about a week after she had sent her letter she received an answer. It was dated Florence. It showed that he had arrived in the city, and informed her that he would call upon her as soon as he could do so with safety. There was no signature, but his handwriting was well known to her, and told her who the writer was.

About an hour after her receipt of the letter Gualtier himself was standing in her presence. He had not changed in appearance since she last saw him, but had the same aspect. Like all pale and cadaverous men, or men of consumptive look, there could be scarcely any change in him which would be for the worse. In Hilda, however, there was a very marked change, which was at once manifest to the searching gaze of his small, keen eyes as they rested upon her. She was not, indeed, so wretched in her appearance as on that

eventful day when she had astonished him by her arrival at Lausanne. Her face was not emaciated, nor were her eyes set in dark cavernous hollows as then, nor was there on her brow the stamp of mortal weakness. What Gualtier saw in her now had reference to other things. He had seen in her nervousness and agitation before, but now he marked in her a loss of all her old self-control, a certain feverish impatience, a wild and unreasoning eagerness—all of which seemed to rise out of recklessness and desperation. Her gestures were vehement, her words careless and impassioned in tone. It was in all this that he marked the greatness of the change in her. The feverish warmth with which she greeted him was of itself totally different from her old manner, and from its being so different it seemed to him unnatural. On the whole, this change struck him painfully, and she seemed to him rather like one in a kind of delirium than one in her sober senses.

"When I last bade you good-by," said she, alluding in this very delicate way to their parting at the hotel in Lausanne, "you assured me that I would one day want your services. You were right. I was mad. I have overcome my madness. I do want you, my friend—more than ever in my life before. You are the only one who can assist me in this emergency. You gave me six months, you remember, but they are not nearly up. You understood my position better than I did."

She spoke in a series of rapid phrases, holding his hand the while, and looking at him with burning intensity of gaze—a gaze which Gualtier felt in his inmost soul, and which made his whole being thrill. Yet that clasp of his hand and that gaze and those words did not inspire him with any pleasant hope. They hardly seemed like the acts or words of Hilda, they were all so unlike herself. Far different from this was the Hilda whom he had known and loved so long. That one was ever present in his mind, and had been for years—her image was never absent. Through the years he had feasted his soul in meditations upon her grand calm, her sublime self-poise, her statuesque beauty, her superiority to all human weakness, whether of love or of remorse. Even in those collisions into which she had come with him she had risen in his estimation. At Chetwynde she had shown some weakness, but in her attitude to him he had discovered and had adored her demoniac beauty. At Lausanne she had been even grander, for then she had defied his worst menaces, and driven him utterly discomfited from her presence. Such was the Hilda of his thoughts. He found her now changed from this, her lofty calm transformed to feverish impatience, her domineering manner changed to one of obsequiousness and flattery. The qualities which had once excited his admiration appeared now to have given way to others altogether commonplace. He had parted with her thinking of her as a powerful demon, he came back to her finding her a weak woman.

But nothing in his manner showed his thoughts. Beneath all these lay his love, and the old devotion manifested itself in his reply.

"You know that always and under all circumstances, my lady, you can command my services. Only one exceptional case has ever arisen, and that you yourself can understand and excuse."

Hilda sat down, motioning him also to a seat, and for a moment remained silent, leaning her head on her hand in deep thought. Gualtier waited for her next words.

"You must not expose yourself to danger," said she at length.

"What danger?"

"*He* will recognize you if he sees you here."

"I know that, and have guarded against it. He is not at home now, is he?"

"No."

"I knew that very well, and waited for his departure before venturing here. I know very well that if he were to catch even the faintest glimpse of me he would recognize me, and it would be somewhat difficult for me to escape. But to-day I happened to see him go out of the Porta Livorna, and I know he is far off by this time. So, you see, I am as cautious as ever. On the whole, and as a general thing, I intend to be guided by circumstances. Perhaps a disguise may be necessary, but that depends upon many different things. I will have, first of all, to learn from you what it is that you want me to do, and then I can arrange my plan of action. But before you begin I think I ought to tell you a very remarkable incident which happened in London not long ago—and one, too, which came very near bringing my career, and yours also, my lady, to a very sudden and a very unpleasant termination."

At this Hilda gave a start.

"What do you mean?" she asked, hurriedly.

"Oh, only this, that a very nice little trap was laid for me in London, and if I had not been unusually cautious I would have fallen into it. Had that been the case all would have been up with me; though as to you, I don't see how your position would have been affected. For," he added, with deep and uncontrollable emotion, "whatever may happen to me, you must know enough of me by this time, in spite of my occasional rebellions, to be as sure of my loyalty to you as of your own existence, and to know that there could be no possibility of my revealing any thing about you; no," he added, as his clenched fist fell upon the table, and his face flushed up deeply at his rising feeling—"no, not even if it were still the fashion to employ torture; not even the rack could extort from me one syllable that could implicate you. After all that I have said, I swear that by all that is most holy!"

He did not look at Hilda as he said this, but his eyes were cast on the floor, and he seemed rather like a man who was uttering a resolution to himself than like one who was making a statement to another. But Hilda showed no emotion that corresponded with his. Any danger to Gualtier, even though she herself were implicated, had no terrors for her, and could not make her heart throb faster by one single pulsation. She had other things on her mind, which to her far outweighed any considerations of personal danger. Personal danger, indeed, instead of being dreaded, would now, in her present mood, have been almost welcomed, so as to afford some distraction from the torture of her thoughts. In the secret of her heart she more than once wished and longed for some appalling calamity—something which might have power to engage all her thoughts and all her mind. The anguish of her heart, arising out of her love for

Lord Chetwynde, had grown so intolerable that any thing, even danger, even discovery, even death itself, seemed welcome now.

It was this feeling which filled her as she went on to ask Gualtier about the nature of the danger which he had escaped, wishing to know what it might be, yet indifferent to it except so far as it might prove to be a distraction to her cares.

When Gualtier last vanished from the scene he had sent the boy to his lodging-house, with the agreement that he should meet him at eight o'clock. The boy's visit and its results have already been narrated.

As for Gualtier, he was profoundly conscious all the while of the possibility that a trap might be laid for him, and that, if this were the case, the advent of his messenger would be seized upon by those who might be in pursuit of him, so as to get on his track. The very cautiousness which had caused him to seek out so carefully a proper messenger, and instruct him in the part which he was to play, kept him on the anxious look-out for the progress of events. From the time that the boy left he stationed himself at the window of his room, which commanded a view of the main entrance, and watched with the closest scrutiny every one who came into the hotel. After a time he thought that the supposed pursuers might come in by some other entrance. With this fear he retreated into his bedroom, which also looked out in front, and locked the door. He found another door here which led into an adjoining room, which was occupied. The key of the door between the bedroom and the sitting-room fitted this other door, so that he was able to open it. The occupant was not in. Through this door he designed to retreat in case of a surprise. But he still thought it most likely that any pursuers would come in by the main door of the hotel, relying upon his information to the boy that he was to be absent. So with this view he stationed himself at the bedroom window, as he had at first stationed himself at the sitting-room window, and watched the main entrance. It was a task which needed the utmost vigilance. A great crowd was thronging there and sweeping by; and among the multitudes that filled the sidewalk it was impossible to distinguish any particular forms or faces except among those who passed up the steps into the hotel. Any one who had less at stake would have wearied of such a task, self-imposed as it was; but Gualtier had too much at stake to allow of weariness, and therefore he kept all his senses wide awake, looking with his eyes at the main entrance, and with his ears listening to the footsteps that came along the hall, to discover any signs of danger to himself.

At last a cab drove up and stopped in front of the door. Gualtier, who had been watching every thing, noticed this also. A man got out. The sight of that man sent a shock to Gualtier's heart. He knew that face and that figure in spite of the changed dress. It was Black Bill.

A second look to confirm that first impression was enough. Like lightning there came to his mind the thought that Black Bill had been watching for him ever since with inexhaustible patience, had encountered the boy, perhaps with the co-operation of the landlord, and had now come to arrest him. One moment sufficed to bring to his mind the thought, and the fear which was born of the thought. Without waiting to take another glance, or to see who else might be in the cab, he hastily unlocked the doors of the bedroom, glided into the hall, passed down a back stairway, and left the hotel by a side entrance far removed from the front-door. Then darting swiftly forward he mingled with the crowd in the Strand, and was soon lost to the pursuit of any followers.

Such was Gualtier's story. To all this strange account Hilda listened attentively.

"It seems," said she at length, "as though Black Bill has been more persevering than we supposed."

"Far more so than I supposed," said Gualtier. "I thought that he would have given up his watch long ago; or that, whether he wished or not, he had been forced to do so from want of resources. But, after all, he certainly has managed to hold on in some way. I suppose he has secured the co-operation of the landlord, and has got up some business at no great distance from the place, so that on the appearance of my messenger he was sent for at once."

"Did you see the others in the cab?"

"No; Black Bill was enough for me. I suppose the boy was there with him."

"Don't you think it likely that Black Bill may have had some communication with the police?"

"I have thought over that question, and it does not seem probable. You see Black Bill is a man who has every reason to keep clear of the police, and the very information which he would give against me would be equally against himself. Such information would first of all lead to his own arrest. He would know that, and would keep clear of them altogether. Besides, he is an old offender, and beyond a doubt very well known to them. His past career has, no doubt, been marked by them; and this information which he would give would be to them merely a confession of fresh crime. Finding themselves unable to catch me, they would satisfy themselves by detaining him. Oh no; Black Bill is altogether too cunning to have any thing to do with the police."

"All that you have been saying," remarked Hilda, "is very well in its way, but unfortunately it is based on the supposition that Black Bill would tell the truth to the police. But, on the contrary, it is highly probable that he would do nothing of the kind. He has ingenuity enough, no doubt, to make up a story to suit his particular case, and to give it such a coloring as to keep himself free from every charge."

"I don't see how he could do that very well. After all, what would be the essence of his story? Simply this: that a crime had been committed, and that he, with some others, had participated in it. The other offenders would be out of reach. What then? What? Why, Black Bill, from the fact of his own acknowledgment, would be taken in charge."

"I don't see that. As I see it, there are various ways by which a man with any cunning could throw all the guilt on another. He might deny that he knew any one was on board, but only suspected it. He might swear that he and the rest were forced into the boat by you, he and they being unarmed, and you well armed. There are other suppositions also by which he would

be able to present himself in the light of an innocent seaman, who, forced to witness the commission of a crime, had lost no time to communicate to the authorities the knowledge of that crime."

"There is something in what you say. But in that case it would have been necessary for him to inform the police months ago."

"Very well; and why may he not?"

"He may have; but it strikes me that he would be more inclined to work the thing up himself; for in that case, if he succeeded, the prize would be all his own."

Some further discussion followed, and then Hilda asked:

"I suppose, by the way you speak, that you saw nothing more of them?"

"No."

"You were not tracked?"

"No."

"Where did you go after leaving the hotel?"

"I left London that evening for Southampton, and then I went west to Bristol; after that to Chetwynde. I staid at Chetwynde till I got your note."

"Did you not see any thing in any of the papers which might lead to the suspicion that you were sought after, or that any thing was being done?"

"No, nothing whatever."

"If any thing is going on, then, it must be in secret."

"Yes; and then, you know, in a country like England it is impossible for the police to work so comprehensively or so efficiently as they do on the Continent—in France, for instance."

"I wonder if the French police are at work?"

"How could they be?"

"I hardly know, unless Black Bill has really informed the London police, and they have communicated to the authorities in France. Of course it all depends on him. The others can have done nothing. He alone is the man from whom any danger could possibly arise. His steady perseverance has a dangerous look, and it is difficult to tell what may come of it yet."

After some further conversation Hilda proceeded to give Gualtier a general idea of the circumstances which had taken place since they parted at Lausanne. Her account was brief and meagre, since she did not wish to say more than was absolutely necessary. From what she said Gualtier gathered this, however—that Lord Chetwynde had continued to be indifferent to Hilda, and he conjectured that his indifference had grown into something like hostility. He learned, moreover, most plainly that Hilda suspected him of an intrigue with another woman, of whom she was bitterly jealous, and it was on this rival whom she hated that she desired that vengeance for which she had summoned him. This much he heard with nothing but gratification, since he looked upon her jealousy as the beginning of hate; and the vengeance which she once more desired could hardly be thwarted a second time.

When she came to describe the affair of the masquerade, however, her tone changed, and she became much more explicit. She went into all the details of that adventure with the utmost minuteness, describing all the particulars of every scene, the dresses which were worn both by Lord Chetwynde and herself, and the general appearance of the grounds. On these she lingered long, describing little incidents in her search, as though unwilling to come to the denouement. When she reached this point of her story she became deeply agitated, and as she described the memorable events of that meeting with the fearful figure of the dead the horror that filled her soul was manifest in her looks and in her words, and communicated itself to Gualtier so strongly that an involuntary shudder passed through him.

After she had ended he was silent for a long time.

"You do not say any thing?" said she.

"I hardly know what to say on the instant," was the reply.

"But are you not yourself overawed when you think of my attempt at vengeance being foiled in so terrible a manner? What would you think if yours were to be baffled in the same way? What would you say, what would you do, if there should come to you this awful phantom? Oh, my God!" she cried, with a groan of horror, "shall I ever forget the agony of that moment when that shape stood before me, and all life seemed on the instant to die out into nothingness!"

Gualtier was silent for a long time, and profoundly thoughtful.

"What are you thinking about?" asked Hilda at last, with some impatience.

"I am thinking that this event may be accounted for on natural grounds," said he.

"No," said Hilda, warmly; "nothing in nature can account for it. When the dead come back to life, reason falters."

She shuddered as she spoke.

"Yes, my lady," said Gualtier, "but the dead do *not* come back to life. You have seen an apparition, I doubt not; but that is a very different thing from the actual manifestation of the dead. What you saw was but the emanation of your own brain. It was your own fancies which thus became visible, and the image which became apparent to your eye was precisely the same as those which come in delirium. A glass of brandy or so may serve to bring up before the eyes a thousand abhorrent spectres. You have been ill, you have been excited, you have been taking drugs; add to this that on that occasion you were in a state of almost frenzy, and you can at once account for the whole thing on the grounds of a stimulated imagination and weak or diseased optic nerves. I can bring forward from various treatises on the optic nerves hundreds of cases as singular as yours, and apparently as unaccountable. Indeed, if I find that this matter continues to affect you so deeply," he continued, with a faint smile, "my first duty will be to read up exclusively on the subject, and have a number of books sent here to you, so as to let you see and judge for yourself."

CHAPTER LXVII.

A SHOCK.

GUALTIER made still further explanations on this point, and mentioned several special cases of apparitions and phantom illusions of which he had read. He showed how in the lives of many great men such things had taken place. The

case of Brutus was one, that of Constantine another. Mohammed, he maintained, saw real apparitions of this sort, and was thus prepared, as he thought, for the prophetic office. The anchorites and saints of the Middle Ages had the same experience. Jeanne d'Arc was a most conspicuous instance. Above all these stood forth two men of a later day, the representatives of two opposite principles, of two systems which were in eternal antagonism, yet these two were alike in their intense natures, their vivid imaginations, and the force of their phantom illusions. Luther threw his ink-bottle at the head of the devil, and Loyola had many a midnight struggle with the same grim personage.

To all this Hilda listened attentively, understanding fully his theory, and fully appreciating the examples which he cited in order to illustrate that theory, whether the examples were those well-known ones which belong to general history, or special instances which had come under his own personal observation. Yet all his arguments and examples failed to have any effect upon her whatever. After all there remained fixed in her mind, and immovable, the idea that she had seen the dead, and in very deed; and that Zillah herself had risen up before her eyes to confound her at the moment of the execution of her vengeance. Such a conviction was too strong to be removed by any arguments or illustrations. That conviction, moreover, had been deepened and intensified by the horror which had followed when she had fled in mad fear, feeling herself pursued by that abhorrent shape, till she had fallen senseless. Nothing of this could be argued away. Nor did she choose to argue about it. While she listened carefully and attentively to Gualtier's words, she scarcely attempted any rejoinder, but contented herself with a quiet reiteration of her former belief.

So this was dismissed. One thing remained, however, and that was the conclusion that Lord Chetwynde was carrying on a desperate intrigue with some English married lady, though whether the husband of this lady was himself English or Italian could not be told. It was evident that Lord Chetwynde's case was not that of the conventional cicisbeo. There was too much desperation in his love. This explained the course which would be easiest to them. To track Lord Chetwynde, and find out who this woman was, should be the first thing. On learning this he was to leave the rest to Hilda. Hilda's work of vengeance would begin with a revelation of the whole case to the supposed husband, and after this they could be guided by circumstances.

With such an understanding as this Gualtier withdrew to begin his work at once. Lord Chetwynde's visits to the villa continued as before, and under the same highly romantic circumstances. Going to India seemed removed from his thoughts further and further every day. He did not feel capable of rousing himself to such an effort. As long as he had the presence and the society of "Miss Lorton," so long he would stay, and as there was no immediate prospect of Obed Chute's leaving Florence, he had dismissed all ideas of any very immediate departure on his part. As for Zillah she soon recovered her health and spirits, and ceased to think about the fearful figure in the summer-house of the fête champêtre. Lord Chetwynde also resumed that strong control over himself which he had formerly maintained, and guarded very carefully against any new outbreak like that of the Villa Rinalci. Yet though he could control his acts, he could not control his looks; and there were times in these sweet, stolen interviews of theirs when his eyes would rest on her with an expression which told more plainly than words the story of his all-absorbing love and tenderness.

But while Lord Chetwynde was thus continuing his secret visits, there was one on his track whom he little suspected. Looking upon his late valet as a vulgar villain, whom his own carelessness had allowed to get into his employ, he had let him go, and had never made any effort to follow him or punish him. As for Hilda, if he ever gave her a thought, it was one of vexation at finding her so fond of him that she would still stay with him rather than leave. "Why can't she go quietly back to Chetwynde?" he thought; and then his more generous nature interposed to quell the thought. He could not forget her devotion in saving his life; though there were times when he felt that the prolongation of that life was not a thing to be thankful for.

As for the family, every thing went on pleasantly and smoothly. Obed was always delighted to see Windham, and would have felt disappointed if he had missed coming every alternate day. Miss Chute shared her brother's appreciation of the visitor. Zillah herself showed no signs which they were able to perceive of the depth of her feelings. Filled, as she was, with one strong passion, it did not interfere with the performance of her duties; nor, if it had done so, would her friends have noticed it. She had the morning hours for the children, and the afternoon for Lord Chetwynde.

In setting about this new task Gualtier felt the need of caution. It was far more perilous than any which he had yet undertaken. Once he relied upon Lord Chetwynde's ignorance of his face, or his contemptuous indifference to his existence. On the strength of this he had been able to come to him undiscovered and to obtain employment. But now all was changed. Lord Chetwynde was keen and observant. When he had once chosen to take notice of a face he would not readily forget it; and to venture into his presence now would be to insure discovery. To guard against that was his first aim, and so he determined to adopt some sort of a disguise. Even with a disguise he saw that it would be perilous to let Lord Chetwynde see him. Hilda had told him enough to make known to him that his late master was fully conscious now of the cause of his disease, and suspected his valet only, so that the watch of the pursuer must now be maintained without his ever exposing himself to the view of this man.

After a long and careful deliberation he chose for a disguise the costume of a Tuscan peasant. Although he had once told Hilda that he never adopted any disguises but such as were suited to his character, yet on this occasion his judgment was certainly at fault, since such a disguise was not the one most appropriate to a man of his appearance and nature. His figure had none of the litheness and grace of movement which is so common among that class, and his sallow skin

"HE FOLLOWED WATCHFULLY AND STEALTHILY."

had nothing in common with the rich olive complexion of the Tuscan face. But it is just possible that Gualtier may have had some little personal vanity which blinded him to his shortcomings in this respect. The pallor of his face was, however, to some extent corrected by a red kerchief which he bound around his head, and the effect of this was increased by a dark wig and mustache. Trusting to this disguise, he prepared for his undertaking.

The next day after his interview with Hilda he obtained a horse, and waited at a spot near Lord Chetwynde's lodgings, wearing a voluminous cloak, one corner of which was flung over his left shoulder in the Italian fashion. A horse was brought up to the door of the hotel; Lord Chetwynde came out, mounted him, and rode off. Gualtier followed at a respectful distance, and kept up his watch for about ten miles. He was not noticed at all. At length he saw Lord Chetwynde ride into the gateway of a villa and disappear. He did not care about following any further, and was very well satisfied with having found out this much so easily.

Leaving his horse in a safe place, Gualtier then posted himself amidst a clump of trees, and kept up his watch for hours. He had to wait almost until midnight; then, at last, his patience was rewarded. It was about half past eleven when he saw Lord Chetwynde come out and pass down the road. He himself followed, but did not go back to town. He found an inn on the road, and put up here for the night.

On the following day he passed the morning in strolling along the road, and had sufficient acquaintance with Italian to inquire from the people about the villa where Lord Chetwynde had gone. He learned that it belonged to a rich Milor Inglese, whose name no one knew, but who was quite popular with the neighboring peasantry. They spoke of ladies in the villa; one old one, and another who was young and very beautiful. There were also children. All this was very gratifying to Gualtier, who, in his own mind, at once settled the relationship of all these. The old woman was the mother, he thought, or perhaps the sister of the Milor Inglese; the young lady was his wife, and they had children. He learned that the Milor Inglese was over fifty years old, and the children were ten and twelve; a circumstance which seemed to show that the younger lady must at least be thirty. He would have liked to ask more, but was afraid to be too inquisitive, for fear of exciting

suspicion. On the whole, he was very well satisfied with the information which he had gained; yet there still remained far more to be done, and there was the necessity of continued watching in person. To this necessity he devoted himself with untiring and zealous patience.

For several days longer he watched thus, and learned that on alternate days Lord Chetwynde was accustomed to ride in at the chief gate, while on the other days he would leave his horse behind and walk in at a little private gate at the nearer end of the park, and some considerable distance from the main entrance. This at once excited his strongest suspicions, and his imagination suggested many different motives for so very clandestine yet so very methodical a system of visiting. Of course he thought that it had reference to a lady, and to nothing else. Then the question arose once more—what to do. It was difficult to tell; but at length his decision was made. He saw that the only way to get at the bottom of this mystery would be to enter the grounds and follow Lord Chetwynde. Such an enterprise was manifestly full of danger, but there was positively no help for it. He could not think of going back to Hilda until he had gained some definite and important information; and all that he had thus far discovered, though very useful as far as it went, was still nothing more than preliminary. The mystery had not yet been solved. He had only arrived at the beginning of it. The thought of this necessity, which was laid upon him, determined him to make the bold resolution of running all risks, and of tracking Lord Chetwynde through the smaller gate.

So on one of those days when he supposed that Lord Chetwynde would be coming there he entered the little gate and concealed himself in the woods, in a place from which he could see any one who might enter while he himself would be free from observation.

He was right in his conjectures. In about half an hour the man whom he was expecting came along, and entering the gate, passed close beside him. Gualtier waited for a time, so as to put a respectful distance between himself and the other. Then he followed watchfully and stealthily, keeping always at the same distance behind. For a hundred yards or so the path wound on so that it was quite easy to follow without being perceived. The path was broad, smooth, well-kept, with dark trees overhanging, and thus shrouding it in gloom. At last Lord Chetwynde suddenly turned to the left into a narrow, rough pathway that scarce deserved the name, for it was little better than a track. Gualtier followed. This path wound so much, and put so many intervening obstacles between him and the other, that he was forced to hurry up so as to keep nearer. In doing so he stepped suddenly on a twig which lay across the track. It broke with a loud snap. At that moment Lord Chetwynde was but a few yards away. He turned, and just as Gualtier had poised himself so as to dart back, he caught the eyes of his enemy fixed upon him. There was no time to wait. The danger of discovery was too great. In an instant he plunged into the thick, dense underbrush, and ran for a long distance in a winding direction. At first he heard Lord Chetwynde's voice shouting to him to stop, then steps as if in pursuit; but finally the sounds of pursuit ceased, and Gualtier, discovering this, stopped to rest. The fact of the case was, that Lord Chetwynde's engagement was of too great importance to allow him to be diverted from it—to run the risk of being late at the tryst for the sake of any vagabond who might be strolling about. He had made but a short chase, and then turned back for a better purpose.

Gualtier, while he rested, soon discovered that he had not the remotest idea of his position. He was in the middle of a dense forest. The underbrush was thick. He could see nothing which might give him any clew to his whereabouts. After again assuring himself that all was quiet, he began to move, trying to do so in as straight a line as possible, and thinking that he must certainly come out somewhere.

He was quite right; for after about half an hour's rough and difficult journeying he came to a path. Whether to turn up or down, to the right or the left, was a question which required some time to decide; but at length he turned to the right, and walked onward. Along this he went for nearly a mile. It then grew wider, and finally became a broad way with thick, well-cut hedges on either side. It seemed to him that he was approaching the central part of these extensive grounds, and perhaps the house itself. This belief was confirmed soon by the appearance of a number of statues and vases which ornamented the pathway. The fear of approaching the house and of being seen made him hesitate for some time; yet his curiosity was strong, and his eagerness to investigate irrepressible. He felt that this opportunity was too good a one to lose, and so he walked on rapidly yet watchfully. At length the path made a sudden sweep, and he saw a sight before him which arrested his steps. He saw a broad avenue, into which his path led not many paces before him. And at no great distance off, toward the right, appeared the top of the villa emerging from among trees. Yet these things did not attract his attention, which centered itself wholly on a man whom he saw in the avenue.

This man was tall, broad-shouldered, with rugged features and wide, square brow. He wore a dress-coat and a broad-brimmed hat of Tuscan straw. In an instant, and with a surprise that was only equaled by his fear, Gualtier recognized the form and features of Obed Chute, which had, in one interview in New York, been very vividly impressed on his memory. Almost at the same time Obed happened to see him, so that retreat was impossible. He looked at him carelessly and then turned away; but a sudden thought seemed to strike him; he turned once more, regarded the intruder intently, and then walked straight up to him.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE VISION OF THE DEAD.

GUALTIER stood rooted to the spot, astounded at such a discovery. His first impulse was flight. But that was impossible. The hedgeway on either side was high and thick, preventing any escape. The flight would have to be made along the open path, and in a chase he did not feel con-

fident that he could escape. Besides, he felt more like relying on his own resources. He had a hope that his disguise might conceal him. Other thoughts also passed through his mind at that moment. How did this Obed Chute come here? Was *he* the Milor Inglese? How did he come into connection with Lord Chetwynde, of all others? Were they working together on some dark plot against Hilda? That seemed the most natural thing to believe.

But he had no time for thought, for even while these were passing through his mind Obed was advancing toward him, until finally he stood before him, confronting him with a dark frown. There was something in his face which showed Gualtier that he was recognized.

"You!" cried Obed; "you! I thought so, and it is so, by the Lord! I never forget a face. You scoundrel! what do you want? What are you doing here? What are you following me for? Are you on that business again? Didn't I give you warning in New York?"

There was something so menacing in his look, and in his wrathful frown, that Gualtier started back a pace, and put his hand to his breast-pocket to seize his revolver.

"No you don't!" exclaimed Obed, and quick as lightning he seized Gualtier's hand, while he held his clenched fist in his face.

"I'm up to all those tricks," he continued, "and you can't come it over me, you scoundrel! Here—off with all that trash."

And knocking off Gualtier's hat, as he held his hand in a grasp from which the unhappy prisoner could not release himself, he tore off his wig and his mustache.

Gualtier was not exactly a coward, for he had done things which required great boldness and presence of mind, and Obed himself had said this much in his criticisms upon Black Bill's story; but at the present moment there was something in the tremendous figure of Obed, and also in the fear which he had that all was discovered, which made him cower into nothingness before his antagonist. Yet he said not a word.

"And now," said Obed, grimly, "perhaps you'll have the kindness to inform me what you are doing here—you, of all men in the world—dodging about in disguise, and tracking my footsteps. What the devil do you mean by sneaking after me again? You saw me once, and that ought to have been enough. What do you want? Is it something more about General Pomeroy? And what do you mean by trying to draw a pistol on me on my own premises? Tell me the truth, you mean, sallow-faced rascal, or I'll shake the bones out of your body!"

In an ordinary case of sudden seizure Gualtier might have contrived to get out of the difficulty by his cunning and presence of mind. But this was by no means an ordinary case. This giant who thus seemed to come down upon him as suddenly as though he had dropped from the skies, and who thundered forth these fierce, imperative questions in his ear, did not allow him much space in which to collect his thoughts, or time to put them into execution. There began to come over him a terror of this man, whom he fancied to be intimately acquainted with his whole career. "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all," and Gualtier, who was generally not a coward, felt very much like one on this occasion. Morally, as well as physically, he felt himself crushed by his opponent. It was, therefore, with utter helplessness, and the loss of all his usual strength of mind and self-control, that he stammered forth his answer:

"I—I came here—to—to get some information."

"You came to get information, did you? Of course you did. Spies generally do."

"I came to see you."

"To see *me*, hey? Then why didn't you come like a man? What's the meaning of this disguise?"

"Because you refused information once, and I thought that if I came in another character, with a different story, I might have a better chance."

"Pooh! don't I see that you're lying? Why didn't you come up through the avenue like a man, instead of sneaking along the paths? Answer me that."

"I wasn't sneaking. I was merely taking a little stroll in your beautiful grounds."

"Wasn't sneaking?" repeated Obed; "then I'd like very much to know what sneaking is, for my own private information. If any man ever looked like a sneak, you did when I first caught your eye."

"I wasn't sneaking," reiterated Gualtier; "I was simply strolling about. I found a gate at the lower end of the park, and walked up quietly. I was anxious to see you."

"Anxious to see me?" said Obed, with a peculiar intonation.

"Yes."

"Why, then, did you look scared out of your life when you did see me? Answer me that."

"My answer is," said Gualtier, with an effort at calmness, "that I neither looked scared nor felt scared. I dare say I may have put myself on my guard, when you rushed at me."

"I didn't rush at you."

"It seemed to me so, and I fell back a step, and prepared for the shock."

"Fell back a step!" sneered Obed; "you looked around to see if you had any ghost of a chance to run for it, and saw you had none. That's about it."

"You are very much mistaken," said Gualtier.

"Young man," replied Obed, severely, "I'm *never* mistaken! So dry up."

"Well, since I've found you," said Gualtier, "will you allow me to ask you a question?"

"What's that?—*you* found *me?* Why, you villain! *I* found *you*. You are a cool case, too. Answer *you* a question? Not a bit of it. But I'll tell you what I will do. I intend to teach you a lesson that you won't forget."

"Beware," said Gualtier, understanding the other's threat—"beware how you offer violence to me."

"Oh, don't trouble yourself at all. I intend to beware. My first idea was to kick you all the way out; but you're such a poor, pale, pitiful concern that I'll be satisfied with only one parting kick. So off with you!"

At this Obed released his grasp, and keeping Gualtier before him he forced him along the avenue toward the gate.

"You needn't look round," said Obed, grimly, as he noticed a furtive glance of Gualtier's. "And you needn't try to get at your revolver. 'Tain't any manner of use, for I've got one, and

can use it better than you, being an American born. You needn't try to walk faster either," he continued, "for you can't escape. I can run faster than you, my legs being longer. You don't know the grounds, either, half so well as I do, although I dare say you've been sneaking about here ever since I came. But let me tell you this, my friend, for your information. You can't come it over me, nohow; for I'm a free American, and I always carry a revolver. Take warning by that one fact, and bear this in mind too—that if I ever see your villainous face about here again, or if I find you prowling about after me any where, I swear I'll blow your bloody brains out as sure as my name's Obed Chute. I'll do it. I will, by the Eternal!"

With such cheerful remarks as these Obed entertained his companion, or prisoner, whichever he was, until they reached the gate. The porter opened it for them, and Gualtier made a wild bound forward. But he was not quick enough; for Obed, true to his promise, was intent on giving him that last kick of which he had spoken. He saw Gualtier's start, and he himself sprang after him with fearful force. Coming up to him, he administered to him one single blow with his foot, so tremendous that it was like the stroke of a catapult, and sent the unhappy wretch headlong to the ground.

After doing this Obed calmly went back, and thought for some time on this singular adventure. He had his own ideas as to the pertinacity of this man, and attributed it to some desire on his part to investigate the old affair of the Chetwynde elopement. What his particular personal interest might be he could not tell, nor did he care much. In fact, at this time the question of his visitor's motives hardly occupied his mind at all, so greatly were his thoughts occupied with pleasurable reminiscences of his own parting salute.

As for Gualtier, it was different; and if his thoughts were also on that parting salute, it was for some time. The blow had been a terrible one; and as he staggered to his feet he found that he could not walk without difficulty. He dragged himself along, overcome by pain and bitter mortification, cursing at every step Obed Chute and all belonging to him, and thus slowly and sullenly went down the road. But the blow of the catapult had been too severe to admit of an easy recovery. Every step was misery and pain; and so, in spite of himself, he was forced to stop. But he dared not rest in any place along the road-side; for the terror of Obed Chute was still strong upon him, and he did not know but that this monster might still take it into his head to pursue him, so as to exact a larger vengeance. So he clambered up a bank on the road-side, where some trees were, and among these he lay down, concealing himself from view.

Pain and terror and dark apprehensions of further danger affected his brain. Concealed among these trees, he lay motionless, hardly daring to breathe, and scarcely able to move. Amidst his pain there still came to him a vague wonder at the presence of Obed Chute here in such close friendship with Lord Chetwynde. How had such a friendship arisen? How was it possible that these two had ever become acquainted? Lord Chetwynde, who had passed his later life in India, could scarcely ever have heard of this man; and even if he had heard of this man, his connection with the Chetwynde family had been of such a nature that an intimate friendship like this was the last thing which might be expected. Such a friendship, unaccountable as it might be, between these two, certainly existed, for he had seen sufficient proofs of it; yet what Lord Chetwynde's aims were he could not tell. It seemed as though, by some singular freak of fortune, he had fallen in love with Obed Chute's wife, and was having clandestine meetings with her somewhere. If so, Obed Chute was the very man to whom Hilda might reveal her knowledge, with the assurance that the most ample vengeance would be exacted by him on the destroyer of his peace and the violator of his friendship.

Amidst his pain, and in spite of it, these thoughts came, and others also. He could not help wondering whether in this close association of these two they had not some one common purpose. Was it possible that they could know any thing about Hilda? This was his first thought; and nothing could show more plainly the unselfish nature of the love of this base man than that at a time like this he should think of her rather than himself. Yet so it was. His thought was, Do they suspect *her*? Has Lord Chetwynde some dark design against *her*, and are they working in unison? As far as he could see there was no possibility of any such design. Hilda's account of Lord Chetwynde's behavior toward her showed him simply a kind of tolerance of her, as though he deemed her a necessary evil, but none of that aversion which he would have shown had he felt the faintest suspicion of the truth. That truth would have been too terrific to have been borne thus by any one. No. He must believe that Hilda was really his wife, or he could not be able to treat her with that courtesy which he always showed—which, cold though it might be in her eyes, was still none the less the courtesy which a gentleman shows to a lady who is his equal. But had he suspected the truth she would have been a criminal of the basest kind, and courtesy from him to her would have been impossible. He saw plainly, therefore, that the truth with regard to Hilda could not be in any way even suspected, and that thus far she was safe.

Another thing showed that there could be no connection between these two arising out of their family affairs. Certainly Lord Chetwynde, with his family pride, was not the man who could ally himself to one who was familiar with the family shame; and, moreover, Hilda had assured him, from her own knowledge, that Lord Chetwynde had never learned any thing of that shame. He had never known it at home, he could not have found it out very easily in India, and in whatever way he had become acquainted with this American, it was scarcely probable that he could have found it out from him. Obed Chute was evidently his friend; but for that very reason, and from the very nature of the case, he could not possibly be known to Lord Chetwynde as the sole living contemporary witness of his mother's dishonor. Obed Chute himself was certainly the last man in the world, as Gualtier thought, who would have been capable of volunteering such information as that. These conclusions to which he came were natural, and

were based on self-evident truths. Yet still the question remained: How was it that these two men, who more than all others were connected with those affairs which most deeply affected himself and Hilda, and from whom he had the chief if not the only reason to fear danger, could now be joined in such intimate friendship? And this was a question which was unanswerable.

As Hilda's position seemed safe, he thought of his own, and wondered whether there could be danger to himself from this. Singularly enough, on that eventful day he had been seen by both Lord Chetwynde and Obed Chute. Lord Chetwynde, he believed, could not have recognized him, or he would not have given up the pursuit so readily. Obed Chute had not only recognized him, but also captured him, and not only captured him, but very severely punished him; yet the very fact that Obed Chute had suffered him to go showed how complete his ignorance must be of the true state of the case. If he had but known even a portion of the truth he would never have allowed him to go; if he and Lord Chetwynde were really allied in an enterprise such as he at first feared when he discovered that alliance, then he himself would have been detained. True, Obed Chute knew no more of him than this, that he had once made inquiries about the Chetwynde family affairs; yet, in case of any serious alliance on their part, this of itself would have been sufficient cause for his detention. Yet Obed Chute had sent him off. What did that show? This, above all, that he could not have any great purpose in connection with his friend.

Amidst all these thoughts his sufferings were extreme. He lay there fearful of pursuit, yet unable to move, distracted by pain both of body and mind. Time passed on, but his fears continued unabated. He was excited and nervous. The pain had brought on a deep physical prostration, which deprived him of his usual self-possession. Every moment he expected to see a gigantic figure in a dress-coat and a broad-brimmed hat of Tuscan straw, with stern, relentless face and gleaming eyes, striding along the road toward him, to seize him in a resistless grasp, and send him to some awful fate; or, if not that, at any rate to administer to him some tremendous blow, like that catapultian kick, which would hurl him in an instant into oblivion.

The time passed by. He lay there in pain and in fear. Excitement and suffering had disordered his brain. The constant apprehension of danger made him watchful, and his distempered imagination made him fancy that every sound was the footstep of his enemy. Watchful against this, he held his pistol in his nerveless grasp, feeling conscious at the same time how ineffectively he would use it if the need for its use should arise. The road before him wound round the hill up which he had clambered in such a way that but a small part of it was visible from where he sat. Behind him rose the wall of the park, and all around the trees grew thickly and sheltered him.

Suddenly, as he looked there with ceaseless vigilance, he became aware of a figure that was moving up the road. It was a woman's form. The figure was dressed in white, the face was white, and round that face there were gathered great masses of dark hair. To his disordered senses it seemed at that moment as if this figure glided along the ground.

Filled with a kind of horror, he raised himself up, one hand still grasping the pistol, while the other clutched a tree in front of him with a convulsive grasp, his eyes fixed on this figure. Something in its outline served to create all this new fear that had arisen, and fascinated his gaze. To his excited sensibility, now rendered morbid by the terrors of the last few hours, this figure, with its white robes, seemed like something supernatural sent across his path. It was dim twilight, and the object was a little indistinct; yet he could see it sufficiently well. There was that about it which sent an awful suspicion over him. All that Hilda had told him recurred to his mind.

And now, just as the figure was passing, and while his eyes were riveted on it, the face slowly and solemnly turned toward him.

At the sight of the face which was thus presented there passed through him a sudden pang of unendurable anguish—a spasm of terror so intolerable that it might make one die on the spot. For a moment only he saw that face. The next moment it had turned away. The figure passed on. Yet in that moment he had seen the face fully and perfectly. He had recognized it! He knew it as the face of one who now lay far down beneath the depths of the sea—of one whom he had betrayed—whom he had done to death! This was the face which now, in all the pallor of the grave, was turned toward him, and seemed to change him to stone as he gazed.

The figure passed on—the figure of Zillah—to this conscience-stricken wretch a phantom of the dead; and he, overwhelmed by this new horror, sank back into insensibility.

CHAPTER LXIX.

THE VISION OF THE LOST.

It was twilight when Gualtier sank back senseless. When he at last came to himself it was night. The moon was shining brightly, and the wind was sighing through the pines solemnly and sadly. It was some time before he could recall his scattered senses so as to understand where he was. At last he remembered, and the gloom around him gave additional force to the thrill of superstitious horror which was excited by that remembrance. He roused himself with a wild effort, and hunted in the grass for his pistol, which now was his only reliance. Finding this, he hurried down toward the road. Every limb now ached, and his brain still felt the stupefying effects of his late swoon. It was only with extreme difficulty that he could drag himself along; yet such was the horror on his mind that he despised the pain, and hurried down the road rapidly, seeking only to escape as soon as possible out from among the shadows of these dark and terrible woods, and into the open plain. His hasty, hurried steps were attended with the severest pain, yet he sped onward, and, at last, after what seemed to him an interminable time, he emerged out of the shadows of the forest into the broad, bright moonlight of the meadows which skirt the Arno. Hurrying along for a few hundred yards, he sank down at last by the road-

side, completely exhausted. In about an hour he resumed his journey, and then sank exhausted once more, after traversing a few miles. It was sunrise before he reached the inn where he stopped. All that day and the next night he lay in bed. On the following day he went to Florence; and, taking the hour when he knew that Lord Chetwynde was out, he called on Hilda.

He had not been there or seen her since that visit which he had paid on his first arrival at Florence from England. He had firmly resolved not to see her until he had done something of some consequence, and by this resolution he intended that he should go to her as the triumphant discoverer of the mystery which she sought to unravel. Something had, indeed, been done, but the dark mystery lay still unrevealed; and what he had discovered was certainly important, yet not of such a kind as could excite any thing like a feeling of triumph. He went to her now because he could not help it, and went in bitterness and humiliation. That he should go at all under such circumstances only showed how complete and utter had been his discomfiture. But yet, in spite of this, there had been no cowardice of which he could accuse himself, and he had shrank from no danger. He had dared Lord Chetwynde almost face to face. Flying from him, he had encountered one whom he might never have anticipated meeting. Last of all, he had been overpowered by the phantom of the dead. All these were sufficient causes for an interview with Hilda, if it were only for the sake of letting her know the fearful obstacles that were accumulating before her, the alliance of her worst enemies, and the reappearance of the spectre.

As Hilda entered the room and looked at him, she was startled at the change in him. The hue of his face had changed from its ordinary sallow complexion to a kind of grizzly pallor. His hands shook with nervous tremulousness, his brow was contracted through pain, his eyes had a wistful eagerness, and he seemed twenty years older.

"You do not look like a bearer of good news," said she, after shaking hands with him in silence.

Gualtier shook his head mournfully.

"Have you found out nothing?"

He sighed.

"I'm afraid I've found out too much by far."

"What do you mean?"

"I hardly know. I only know this, that my searches have shown me that the mystery is deeper than ever."

"You seem to me to be very quickly discouraged," said Hilda, in a disappointed tone.

"That which I have found out and seen," said Gualtier, solemnly, "is something which might discourage the most persevering, and appall the boldest. My lady," he added, mournfully, "there is a power at work which stands between you and the accomplishment of your purpose, and dashes us back when that purpose seems nearest to its attainment."

"I do not understand you," said Hilda, slowly, while a dark foreboding arose in her mind, and a fearful suspicion of Gualtier's meaning. "Tell me what you mean, and what you have been doing since I saw you last. You certainly must have had a very unusual experience."

It was with an evident effort that Gualtier was able to speak. His words came painfully and slowly, and in this way he told his story.

He began by narrating the steps which he had taken to secure himself from discovery by the use of a disguise, and his first tracking of Lord Chetwynde to the gates of the villa. He described the situation to her very clearly, and told her all that he had learned from the peasants. He then told her how, by long watching, he had discovered Lord Chetwynde's periodical visits, alternately made at the great and the small gate, and had resolved to find out the reason of such very singular journeys.

To all this Hilda listened with breathless interest and intense emotion, which increased, if possible, up to that time when he was noticed and pursued by Lord Chetwynde. Then followed the story of his journey through the woods and the paths till he found himself face to face with Obed Chute.

At the mention of this name she interrupted him with an exclamation of wonder and despair, followed by many questions. She herself felt all that perplexity at this discovery of his friendship with Lord Chetwynde which Gualtier had felt, and all the thoughts which then had occurred to him now came to her, to be poured forth in innumerable questions. Such questions he was, of course, unable to answer. The appearance of this man upon the scene was a circumstance which excited in Hilda's mind vague apprehensions of some unknown danger; yet his connection with Lord Chetwynde was so inexplicable that it was impossible to know what to think or to fear.

The discussion of this new turn in the progress of things took up some time. Exciting as this intelligence had been to Hilda, the conclusion of Gualtier's narrative was far more so. This was the climax, and Gualtier, who had been weak and languid in speaking about the other things, here rose into unusual excitement, enlarging upon every particular in that occurrence, and introducing all those details which his own vivid imagination had in that moment of half delirium thrown around the figure which he had seen.

"*It* floated before me," said he, with a shudder; "its robes were white, and hung down as though still dripping with the water of the sea. It moved noiselessly until it came opposite to me, and then turned its full face toward me. The eyes were bright and luminous, and seemed to burn into my soul. They are before me yet. Never shall I forget the horror of that moment. When the figure passed on I fell down senseless."

"In the name of God!" burst forth Hilda, whose eyes dilated with the terror of that tale, while she trembled from head to foot in fearful sympathy, "is this true? Can it be? Did you, too, see *her*?"

"Herself, and no other!" answered Gualtier, in a scarce audible voice.

"Once before," said Hilda, "that apparition came. It was to me. You know what the effect was. I told you. You were then very cool and philosophical. You found it very easy to account for it on scientific principles. You spoke of excitement, imagination, and diseased optic nerves. Now, in your own case, have you been able to account for this in the same way?"

"I have not," said Gualtier. "Such arguments to me now seem to be nothing but words.

—empty words, satisfactory enough, no doubt, to those who have never had this revelation of another world, but idle and meaningless to those who have seen what I have seen. Why, do I not know that she is beneath the Mediterranean, and yet did I not see her myself? You were right, though I did not understand your feelings, when you found all my theories vain. Now, since I have had your experience, I, too, find them vain. It's the old story—the old, old hackneyed saying," he continued, wearily—

"'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

A long silence followed.

"We have been warned," said Hilda at length. "The dead arise before us," she continued, solemnly, "to thwart our plans and our purposes. The dead wife of Lord Chetwynde comes back from beneath the sea to prevent our undertakings, and to protect him from us."

Gualtier said nothing. In his own soul he felt the deep truth of this remark. Both sat now for some time in silence and in solemn meditation, while a deep gloom settled down upon them.

At last Gualtier spoke.

"It would have been far better," said he, "if you had allowed me to complete that business. It was nearly done. The worst was over. You should not have interfered."

Hilda made no reply. In her own heart there were now wild desires, and already she herself had become familiar with this thought.

"It can yet be done," said Gualtier.

"But how can you do it again—after this?" said Hilda.

"*You* are now the one," replied Gualtier. "You have the power and the opportunity. As for me, you know that I could not become his valet again. The chance was once all my own, but you destroyed it. I dare not venture before him again. It would be ruin to both of us. He would recognize me under any disguise, and have me at once arrested. But if you know any way in which I can be of use, or in which I can have access to his presence, tell me, and I will gladly risk my life to please you."

But Hilda knew of none, and had nothing to say.

"You, and you alone, have the power now," said Gualtier; "this work must be done by you alone."

"Yes," said Hilda, after a pause. "It is true, I have the power—I have the power," she repeated, in a tone of gloomy resolve, "and the power shall be exercised, either on him, *or on myself*."

"On *yourself!*"

"Yes."

"Are you still thinking of such a thing as that?" asked Gualtier, with a shudder.

"That thought," said Hilda, calmly, "has been familiar to me before, as you very well know. It is still a familiar one, and it may be acted upon at any moment."

"Would you dare to do it?"

"Dare to do it!" repeated Hilda. "Do you ask that question of me after what I told you at Lausanne? Did I not tell you there that what I dared to administer to another, I dared also to administer to myself? You surely must remember how weak all those menaces of yours proved when you tried to coerce me again as you had done once before. You must know the reason why they were so powerless. It was because to me all life, and all the honors and pleasures of life, had grown to be nothing without that one aim after which I was seeking. Do you not understand yet?"

"My God!" was Gualtier's reply, "how you love that man!" These words burst forth involuntarily, as he looked at her in the anguish of his despair.

Hilda's eyes fastened themselves on his, and looked at him out of the depths of a despair which was deeper than his own—a despair which had now made life valueless.

"You can not—you will not," exclaimed Gualtier, passionately.

"I can," said Hilda, "and it is very possible that I will."

"You do not know what it is that you speak about."

"I am not afraid of death," said Hilda, coldly, "if that is what you mean. It can not be worse than this life of mine."

"But you do not understand what it means," said Gualtier. "I am not speaking of the mere act itself, but of its consequences. Picture to yourself Lord Chetwynde exulting over this, and seeing that hated obstacle removed which kept him from his perfect happiness. You die, and you leave him to pursue uninterrupted the joy that he has with his paramour. Can you face such a thought as that? Would not this woman rejoice at hearing of such a thing? Do you wish to add to their happiness? Are you so sublimely self-sacrificing that you will die to make Lord Chetwynde happy in his love?"

"How can he be happy in his love?" said Hilda. "She is married."

"She may not be. You only conjecture that. It may be her father whom she guards against, or her guardian. Obed Chute is no doubt the man—either her father or guardian, and Lord Chetwynde has to guard against suspicion. But what then? If you die, can he not find some other, and solace himself in her smiles, and in the wealth that will now be all his own?"

These words stung Hilda to the quick, and she sat silent and thoughtful. To die so as to get rid of trouble was one thing, but a death which should have such consequences as these was a very different thing. Singularly enough, she had never thought of this before. And now, when the thought came, it was intolerable. It produced within her a new revolution of feeling, and turned her thoughts away from that gloomy idea which had so often haunted her.

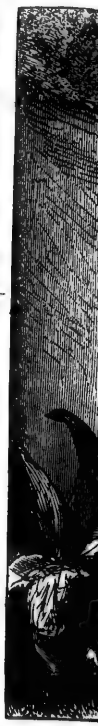
"*He* is the only one against whom you can work," continued Gualtier; "and you alone have the power of doing it."

Hilda said nothing. If this work must be done by her, there were many things to be considered, and these required time.

"But you will not desert me," said she, suddenly; for she fancied from Gualtier's manner that he had given up all further idea of helping her.

His face flushed.

"Is it possible that you can still find any way to employ me? This is more than I hoped for. I feared that your indignation at my failure would cause you to dismiss me as useless. If



"THE DEAD AND THE LOST ALL COME TO ME."

you can find any thing for me to do, I can assure you that the only happiness that I can have will be in doing that thing."

"Your failure," said Hilda, "was not your fault. You have done well, and suffered much. I am not ungrateful. You will be rewarded yet. I shall yet have something for you to do. I will send for you when the time comes."

She rose as she said this, and held out her hand to Gualtier. He took it respectfully, and with an earnest look at her, full of gratitude and devotion, he withdrew.

Hilda sat for a long time involved in deep thought. What should be her next plan of action? Many different things suggested themselves, but all seemed equally impracticable, or at least objectionable. Nor was she as yet prepared to begin with her own hands, and by herself, that part which Gualtier had suggested. Not yet were her nerves steady enough. But the hint which Gualtier had thrown out about the probable results of her own death upon Lord Chetwynde did more to reconcile her to life than any thing that could have happened short of actually gaining him for herself.

Wearied at last of fruitless plans and resultless thoughts, she went out for a walk. She dressed herself in black, and wore a heavy black crape veil which entirely concealed the features. She knew no one in Florence from whom she needed to disguise herself, but her nature was of itself secretive, and even in a thing like this she chose concealment rather than openness. Besides, she had some vague hopes that she might encounter Lord Chetwynde somewhere, perhaps with this woman, and could watch him while unobserved herself.

She walked as far as the church of Santa Croce. She walked up the steps with a vague idea of going in.

As she walked up there came a woman down the steps dressed in as deep mourning as Hilda herself. She was old, she was slender, her veil was thrown back, and the white face was plainly visible to Hilda as she passed. Hilda stood rooted to the spot, though the other woman did not notice her emotion, nor could she have seen her face through the veil. She stood paralyzed, and looking after the retreating figure as it moved away.

"The dead and the lost," she murmured, as she stood there with clasped hands—"the dead and the lost all come to me! Mrs. Hart! About her face there can be no mistake. What

is she doing here—in the same town with Lord Chetwynde? Am I ruined yet or not? I'm afraid I have not much time left me to run my course."

In deep despondency she retraced her steps, and went back to her room.

CHAPTER LXX.

NEW PROJECTS.

THE unexpected appearance of Mrs. Hart was in many respects, and for many reasons, an awful shock to Hilda. It was a new danger, less terrible than that which had arisen from the phantom which had twice appeared, yet perhaps in reality more perilous. It filled her with apprehensions of the worst. All that night she lay awake thinking over it. How had Mrs. Hart come to Florence, and why, and what was she doing here? Such were her thoughts. Was she also in connection with Lord Chetwynde and with this Obed Chute? It seemed probable. If so, then it seemed equally probable that there was some design on foot against her. At first the thought of this inspired in her a great fear, and a desire to fly from the impending danger. For a moment she almost decided to give up her present purpose forever, collect as much money as she could, and fly to some distant place, where she might get rid of all her danger and forget all her troubles. But this thought was only momentary, for higher than her desire for comfort or peace of mind rose her thirst for vengeance. It would not satisfy her that she alone should suffer. Lord Chetwynde also should have his own share, and she would begin by unmasking him and revealing his intrigue to her supposed husband.

On the following day Gualtier called, and in a few words she told him what had taken place.

"Are you really confident that it was Mrs. Hart?" he asked, with some anxiety.

"As confident as I am of my own existence. Indeed, no mistake was possible."

Gualtier looked deeply troubled.

"It looks bad," said he; "but, after all, there are ways of accounting for it. She may have heard that Lord Chetwynde intended to go to Italy and to Florence—for it was quite possible that he mentioned it to her at the Castle—and when she went away she may have intended to come here in search of him. I dare say she went to London first, and found out from his solicitors where he had gone. There isn't the slightest probability, at any rate, that he can have met with her. If he had met with her, you would have known it yourself soon enough. She would have been here to see his wife, with the same affectionate solicitude which she showed once before—which you told me of. No. Rest assured Lord Chetwynde knows nothing of her presence here. There are others who take up all his thoughts. It seems probable, also, that she has just arrived, and there is no doubt that she is on the look-out for him. At any rate, there is one comfort. You are sure, you say, that she did not recognize you?"

"No; that was impossible; for I wore a thick veil. No one could possibly distinguish my features."

"And she can not, of course, suspect that you are here?"

"She can not have any such suspicion, unless we have been ourselves living in the dark all this time—unless she is really in league with Lord Chetwynde. And who can tell? Perhaps all this time this Chute and Mrs. Hart and Lord Chetwynde have their own designs, and are quietly weaving a net around me from which I can not escape. Who can tell? Ah! how easily I could escape—if it were not for one thing!"

"Oh, as to that, you may dismiss the idea," said Gualtier, confidently; "and as for Lord Chetwynde, you may rest assured that he does not think enough about you to take the smallest trouble one way or another."

Hilda's eyes blazed.

"He shall have cause enough to think about me yet," she cried. "I have made up my mind what I am to do next."

"What is that?"

"I intend to go myself to Obed Chute's villa."

"The villa! Yourself!"

"Yes."

"You!"

"I—myself. You can not go."

"No. But how can you go?"

"Easily enough. I have nothing to fear."

"But this man is a perfect demon. How will you be able to encounter him? He would treat you as brutally as a savage. I know him well. I have reason to. You are not the one to go there."

"Oh yes, I am," said Hilda, carelessly. "You forget what a difference there is between a visit from you and a visit from me."

"There is a difference, it is true; but I doubt whether Obed Chute is the man to see it. At any rate, you can not think of going without some pretext. And what one can you possibly have that will be at all plausible?"

"Pretext! I have the best in the world. It is hardly a pretext either. I intend to go openly, in my own proper person—as Lady Chetwynde."

"As Lady Chetwynde!" repeated Gualtier, in amazement. "What do you mean? Would it be too much to ask you what your plan may be, or what it is that you may have in view?"

"It's simple enough," said Hilda. "It is this. You will understand it readily enough, I think. You see, I have discovered by accident some mysterious writing in cipher, which by another accident I have been enabled to unravel. Now you understand that this writing makes very serious charges indeed against my father, the late General Pomeroy. He is dead; but I, as an affectionate daughter, am most anxious to understand the meaning of this fearful accusation thus made against the best of men. I have seen the name of this Obed Chute mentioned in some of the papers connected with the secret writing, and have found certain letters from him referring to the case. Having heard very unexpectedly that he is in Florence, I intend to call on him to implore him to explain to me all this mystery."

"That is admirable," said Gualtier.

"Of course it is," said Hilda; "nothing, indeed, could be better. This will give me admission to the villa. Once in there, I shall have to rely upon circumstances. Whatever those circumstances

may be, I shall, at least, be confronted with Lord Chetwynde, and find out who this woman is. I hope to win the friendship and the confidence of these people. They will pity me, sympathize with me, and invite me there. If Lord Chetwynde is such a friend, they can hardly overlook his wife. The woman, whoever she may be, even if she hates me, as she must, will yet see that it is her best policy to be at least civil to me. And that will open a way to final and complete vengeance."

To this plan Gualtier listened in unfeigned admiration.

"You have solved the mystery!" said he, excitedly. "You will—you must succeed, where I have failed so miserably."

"No," said Hilda, "you have not failed. Had it not been for you I could never have had this chance. It is by your discovery of Obed Chute that you have made my present course possible. You have suffered for my cause, but your sufferings will make that cause at last triumphant."

"For such a result as that I would suffer ten thousand times more," said Gualtier, in impassioned tones.

"You will not be exposed to any further sufferings, my friend," said Hilda. "I only want your assistance now."

"It is yours already. Whatever you ask I am ready to do."

"What I ask is not much," said Hilda. "I merely want you to be near the spot, so as to be in readiness to assist me."

"On the spot! Do you mean at the villa?"

"No, not at the villa, but near it, somewhere along the road. I wish you to see who goes and comes. Go out there to-day, and watch. You need not go within a mile of the villa itself; that will be enough. You will then know when Lord Chetwynde comes. You can watch from behind some hedge, I suppose. Can you do that?"

"That?—that is but a slight thing. Most willingly will I do this, and far more, no matter what, even if I have to face a second time that phantom."

"I will go out to-morrow, or on the following day. I want you to be on the watch, and see who may go to the villa, so that when I come you may let me know. I do not want to call unless I positively know that Lord Chetwynde will be there, and the family also. They may possibly go out for a drive, or something may happen, and this is what I want you to be on the look-out for. If Lord Chetwynde is there, and that woman, there will probably be a scene," continued Hilda, gloomily; "but it will be a scene in which, from the very nature of the case, I ought to be triumphant. I've been suffering too much of late. It is now about time for a change, and it seems to me that it is now my turn to have good fortune. Indeed, I can not conceive how there can be any failure. The only possible awkwardness would be the presence of Mrs. Hart. If she should be there, then—why, then, I'm afraid all would be over. That is a risk, however, and I must run it."

"That need not be regarded," said Gualtier. "If Mrs. Hart had found Lord Chetwynde, you would have known it before this."

"That is my chief reliance."

"Have you those papers?"

"Papers?"

"Yes; the cipher and the letters."

"Oh yes. Did I not say that I had them all?"

"No. I thought that you had given them all to—to *her*," said Gualtier.

"So I did; but I got them back, and have kept them, I don't know why. I suppose it was from an instinct of forecast. Whatever was the reason, however, they are now of priceless value. For they enable me now to go as the daughter of one who has been charged in these papers with the commission of the most atrocious crimes. This must all be explained to me, and by this Obed Chute, who is the only living person who can do it."

"I am glad that what I have done will be useful to you," said Gualtier. "You may trust to me now to do all that man can do. I will go and watch and wait till you come."

Hilda thereupon expressed the deepest gratitude to him, and she did this in language far more earnest than any which she had ever before used to him. It may have been the consciousness that this would be the last service which he was to perform for her; it may have been an intentional recognition of his past acts of love and devotion; it may have been a tardy act of recognition of all his fidelity and constancy; but, whatever it was, her words sank deep into his soul.

"Those words," said he, "are a reward for all the past. May I not yet hope for a future reward?"

"You may, my friend. Did I not give you my promise?"

"*Hilda!*"

This word burst from him. It was the first time that he had so addressed her. Not even in the hour of his triumph and coercion had he ventured upon this. But now her kindness had emboldened him. He took her hand, and pressed it to his lips.

"I have a presentiment of evil," said he. "We may never meet again. But you will not forget me?"

Hilda gave a long sigh.

"If we meet again," said she, "we shall see enough of one another. If not"—and she paused for a moment—"if not, then"—and a solemn cadence came to her voice—"then you will be the one who will remember, and *I* shall be the one *to be remembered*. Farewell, my friend!"

She held out her hand.

Once more Gualtier pressed it to his lips.

Then he took his departure.

CHAPTER LXXI.

A RACE FOR LIFE.

On leaving Hilda Gualtier went out to the villa. Before his departure he furnished himself with a new disguise, different from his former one, and one, too, which he thought would be better adapted to his purposes of concealment. A gray wig, a slouched hat, and the dress of a peasant, served to give him the appearance of an aged countryman, while a staff which he held in his hand, and a stoop in his shoulders, heightened the disguise. He got a lift on a wine-cart for some miles, and at length reached a place not far away from the villa.

The villa itself, as it rose up from among sur-

rounding trees, on a spur of the Apennines, was in sight. On either side of the valley rose the mountains. The Arno, as it wound along, approached the place on this side of the valley, and the mountains were not more than half a mile distant, though on the other the plain was several miles in width. The place which Gualtier had chosen seemed to him to be quite near enough to the villa for observation, and far enough distant for safety. The thought of a possible encounter with Obed Chute was ever present in his mind, and this time he determined to guard against all surprise, and, if an encounter should be inevitable, to use his revolver before his enemy could prevent him. His pride and his manhood both urged him to gain some satisfaction for that shame on both which he had experienced.

After watching one afternoon he obtained lodging at a humble farm-house, and when the next morning came he rose refreshed by sleep, and encouraged by the result of his meditations. He began to be hopeful about final success. The scheme which Hilda had formed seemed to be one which could not fail by any possibility. Whatever Hilda's own purposes might be, to him they meant one thing plainly, and that was a complete and irreparable breach between herself and Lord Chetwynde. To him this was the first desire of his heart, since that removed the one great obstacle that lay between him and her. If he could only see her love for Lord Chetwynde transformed to vengeance, and find them changed from their present attitude of friendship to one of open and implacable enmity, then his own hopes and prospects would be secured, as he thought. Already he saw the beginning of this. In Hilda's manner, in her tone, in her looks, he marked the fierce anger and vengeful feeling which had now taken possession of her. He had witnessed also a greater consideration for himself, arising this time not out of coercion, but from free-will. All this was in his favor. Whether she could ever fully succeed in her thirst for vengeance did not much matter. Indeed, it was better for him that the desire should not be carried out, but that she should remain unsatisfied, for then Lord Chetwynde would only become all the more hateful to her every day, and that hate would serve to give to him fresh opportunities of binding her to himself.

All these thoughts encouraged him. A hope began to rise within his heart brighter than any which he had ever dared to entertain before. He found himself now so completely identified with Hilda's dearest plans and purposes, and so much deeper an understanding between them, that it was impossible for him to refrain from encouraging his hopes to the utmost.

Now, as he sat there watching, his fears of danger grew weaker, and he felt emboldened to venture nearer, so as to fulfill to the utmost the wishes of Hilda. Her image drove out from his thoughts the frowning face of Obed Chute, and the white form of that phantom whose aspect had once crushed him into lifelessness. He thought that it was but a feeble devotion to wait in ambush at such a distance, when, by venturing nearer, he might learn much more. Hours passed, and there was no sign of any one belonging to the villa either going or coming, and at length the thought that was in his mind grew too strong to be resisted. He determined to venture nearer—how near he did not know; at any rate, he could safely venture much nearer than this. Had he not his disguise, and was he not armed? And when he met Hilda would it not be shame to him if he could only tell her that he had staid so far away, and had feared to venture nearer?

He started off. His bowed form, white face, peasant garb, and the staff which supported his unsteady steps, he thought would be surely an impenetrable disguise. True, once before the keen glance of Obed Chute had penetrated his disguise, but then the circumstances under which they met were suspicious. Now, even if he should chance to meet him, he could not be suspected. Who would suspect an aged peasant toiling along the public highway?

He gained fresh courage at every step. As he drew nearer and still nearer to the villa he began to think of venturing into the grounds once more. He thought that if he did so he could be more guarded, and steal along through the trees, beside the paths, and not on them. The thought became a stronger temptation to him every moment, and at length, as he advanced nearer, he had almost decided to venture into that little gate, which was now full in view. He sat down by the road-side and looked at it. At length he rose and walked on, having made up his mind to pass through, at any rate, and be guided by circumstances. It would be something to his credit, he thought, if he could only tell Hilda that he had been in those grounds again.

But as he advanced he heard the sound of approaching wheels. Some carriage was coming rapidly down the road toward him, and he paused for a moment, as the idea struck him that possibly the tremendous Obed Chute might be in it. He walked on very slowly, looking keenly ahead.

Soon the carriage came into view from behind a bend in the road. A thrill passed through Gualtier in spite of himself. He grasped his staff in his right hand, and plunging his left into his breast-pocket, he grasped his pistol. Nearer and nearer the carriage came, and he could easily recognize the square face, broad shoulders, and stalwart frame of Obed Chute. With him there was a lady, whose face he could not as yet recognize. And now there arose within him an intense desire to see the face of this lady. She was beyond a doubt the very one of whom Lord Chetwynde was so eager and so constant in his pursuit. Could he but see her face once it would be a great gain, for he could recognize her elsewhere, and thus do something of importance in assisting Hilda. With this determination in his mind he went on, and bowing down his head like a decrepit old man, he hobbled along, leaning on his staff, but at the same time keeping his eyes upturned and fixed on the lady.

The carriage came nearer and nearer. A strange feeling came over Gualtier—something like an anguish of fear and of wonder. At last the lady's face became plainly discernible. That face! White it was, and the whiteness was intensified by the deep blackness of the hair, while the eyes were large and lustrous, and rested full upon him in something like pity. That face! Was this another vision?

Great God!

"'STOP!' SHE CRIED, TEARING WITH ONE HAND AT THE REINS."

A groan burst from him as this face thus revealed itself. What was this? What did it mean? Was this, too, a phantom? Was it a deceit and mockery of his senses? Was it an eidolon from the realms of death, or could it be an actual material object—a living being? Here was one whom he *knew* to be dead. How came she here? Or by what marvel could any one else so resemble her? Yet it was not a resemblance. It was *herself!*

His brain whirled. All thoughts of all things else faded away in that horror and in that surprise. Spell-bound he stood, while his face was upturned and his eyes were fixed on the lady.

And thus, as he stood rooted to the spot, motionless and staring, the carriage came whirling up and flashed past him. That singular figure, in the peasant garb, with rigid face, and with horror in his eyes, which stared like the eyes of a maniac, attracted the look of the lady. At first she had a vague idea that it was a beggar, but on coming closer she recognized all. As the carriage dashed by she sprang suddenly to her feet with a piercing scream. She snatched the reins convulsively and tore at them in a sort of frenzy.

"It is *he!* It is *he!* Stop!" she cried, tearing with one hand at the reins and with the other gesticulating vehemently in some uncontrollable passion. "It is he—it is Gualtier! Stop! Quick! Seize him, or it will be too late!"

That scream and those words roused Obed. He, too, had noticed the figure by the roadside, but he had only thrown a careless glance. The words of Zillah, however, thrilled through him. He pulled in the horses savagely. They were foaming and plunging.

As he did this Zillah dropped the reins, and with trembling frame, and eyes flashing with excitement, stood staring back.

"There! there!" she cried—"there, I tell you, is Gualtier, my assassin! He is disguised! I know him! It is Gualtier! He is tracking me now! Stop him! Seize him! Don't let him escape! Make haste!"

These words burst from her like a torrent, and these, with her wild gesticulations, showed the intensity of her excitement. In an instant Obed had divined the whole meaning of this. A man in disguise had already penetrated even into his grounds. This he thought was the same man, in another disguise, still haunting the place and prowling about with his sinister motive. By

Zillah's words he saw that she had recognized this man as that very Gualtier after whom he had been searching so long, and whose name had been so constantly in his mind. And now, in the same instant, he saw that the man who had once sought him in America, and who had recently ventured into his park, was the very one who had betrayed Miss Lorton—the man on whose track he had been setting the police of England, France, and Italy.

It was but for an instant that this thought filled his mind. In another instant Obed had flung down the reins and sprung into the road.

Meanwhile Gualtier had stood motionless, horror-stricken, and paralyzed. But the scream of Zillah and her frantic words had shown him beyond the possibility of a doubt that she was at any rate *alive*, and more than this, that she had recognized him. How she had thus come to life he could not know, nor was there time to conjecture. For now another danger was impending, and, in the person of Obed Chute, was rushing down swiftly upon him. At the sight of this new peril he hesitated not a moment, but snatched his pistol, took aim, and fired shot after shot. But in his haste and agitation a correct aim was impossible. He fired wildly. Four bullets, one after the other, whistled through the air past Obed's head, yet he still came on. The vision of that awful face rushing down upon him thus through the smoke-clouds, with vengeance gleaming from the eyes, and the resolute mouth close shut in implacable sternness, was sufficient to show Gualtier that his career was nearly run. He had a sudden feeling that all was lost. With a wild leap he bounded over the ditch by the road-side, and tore over the fields with the frantic speed of one flying from death.

But the avenger was at his heels.

To fly from vengeance and from death is a thing that brings a strong motive to exertion, but there are other things sometimes which may give an equal impulse. Gualtier was lithe, sinewy, and agile, nimble of foot too, and inspired by the consciousness of danger; but the man who pursued him was one whose mighty thews and sinews had been formed under the shadows of the Alleghanies, and trained by years of early experience to every exercise of strength. This man also was inspired by a feeling which could contribute a motive for exertion as powerful as the fear which filled the heart of Gualtier, and his own pride, his honor, and his affection for Zillah, all urged him on. He followed fast, and followed faster. Gualtier had a long start, but Obed steadily gained, until at last the fugitive could hear the footsteps of his pursuer.

Between the skirts of the hills and the Arno there was a plain about two miles in width. On the other side of the river the fields spread away again for a wider extent, interspersed with groves and vineyards. The Arno was full, and flowing rapidly. Here, then, seemed to be to the fugitive the last chance for escape—here, in that swift-flowing river. Gualtier could swim admirably. Toward this river he turned his flying steps, thinking that his pursuer might not be able to follow, and hoping for safety here. Yet all the time he expected to hear a pistol-shot, for Obed had already told him, in that memorable meeting in the park, that he carried a revolver. That he did not use it now seemed to Gualtier to show plainly that he must have left it behind. As for Obed, he neither fired a pistol-shot nor threatened to fire one. He did not even draw his revolver from his pocket. He simply ran as fast as he could after the fugitive.

That fugitive, in order to gain the river, was compelled to run obliquely, and thus he gave an additional advantage to his pursuer, who tried to head him off, and thus was able to gain on him by some additional paces. But to Gualtier that river-bank was now the place of salvation, and that was at any rate a last resort. Besides this, his pistol still was in his hand, and in it there still remained two shots, which might yet avail him at the last moment. Onward, then, he bounded with frantic exertions while these thoughts sped through his mind. But, mingled with these, there came strange floating thoughts of that figure in the carriage—that one who had met with a wondrous resurrection from the death to which he had sent her, and who was now looking on at his flight, and the pursuit of her avenger. All these various thoughts swept confusedly through his brain in the madness of that hour; for thus it is that often, when death seems to impend, the mind becomes endowed with colossal powers, and all the events of a stormy and agitated life can be crowded into one moment. Now, as Gualtier fled, and as he contrived his plan of escape by the river, there were in his mind, parallel with these thoughts, others of equal power—thoughts of that fair young girl whom he had cast adrift in a sinking ship on the wide midnight sea. Saved she had been, beyond a doubt, for there she was, with her eyes fixed on him in his agony. Avenged she would be also, unless he could escape that terrible pursuer who now every moment came faster and faster behind.

Avenged? No, not yet. Still there was a chance. The river flowed near with its full stream. The opposite shores seemed to invite him; the trees and groves and vineyards there seemed to beckon him onward. At last his feet were on the bank. One plunge, he thought, and he would be safe. But for one instant he delayed that plunge. There were other desires in his heart than that of safety—there was the desire for vengeance. Still there was a chance left. His pistol was in his hand—it yet held two shots. In these he might find both safety and vengeance.

Suddenly he turned as he reached the bank, and instantaneously he discharged the last shots of the pistol at his pursuer. Then he plunged headlong into the river.

Another pursuer, even if he had not fallen, might have faltered at all these pistol-shots. Not so Obed. To him the revolver was a familiar thing—a toy, in fact, the sport of all his life. Often before had pistol-shots whistled about his head, and under circumstances far more dangerous than this. Obed's life had been a varied one, and he could tell many strange tales of adventures in the western parts of America—that country where civilized man has encountered, and can still encounter, those tribes which are his most formidable foes. If at that moment Obed could have bared his mighty body to plunge into the Arno, he could have exhibited a vast number of old scars from wounds which had been received in Kansas, in

California, and in Mexico. But Obed had not time to bare his mighty body. As those last pistol-shots flashed before him he had not time even to wink his eyes, but rushing on with unabated vigor, he reached the river's bank, and in a moment had plunged in after Gualtier.

The fugitive heard that plunge. He heard behind him the quick strokes of a strong swimmer, and then he knew and felt that all was lost. Upon that last chance he had staked every thing, and that last chance had failed utterly. This man who had insulted him, bullied him, and overpowered him—this man who had been impervious to his shots on the road and on the river-bank—this man who had gained on him steadily in that desperate race for life which he had run—this demon of a man was now gaining on him in the water also! If his pursuer had stood on the bank and had shot him, he might have received the wound and sank to death without a murmur. But to be followed so, to be caught, to be dragged back—this was the terror and the shame. This stimulated him to fiercer exertions. Despair itself gave a kind of madness to his efforts. But terror and shame and despair itself could not snatch him from the grasp of his remorseless pursuer. Nearer and nearer that pursuer came; more and more desperate grew Gualtier's efforts. In vain. As he struck out with almost superhuman exertions he suddenly felt his foot grasped by a resistless hand. All was over. That despair which a moment before had intensified his efforts now relaxed his strength. He felt himself dragged back to the shore from which he had been flying. He was lost! He struggled no longer to escape, but only to keep his head above water, from an instinct of self-preservation. And in that anguish of fear and despair that now settled upon his soul he had a vague terror that on the moment of landing he would be annihilated.

But, instead of that, he felt himself raised to his feet, and the strong grasp relaxed its hold. He looked up at his captor, and saw him standing before him regarding him with a grim smile.

"So you're the Gualtier, are you," said Obed, "of whose exploits I have heard so much? You're rather a small parcel, I should say, but you've done con-siderable mischief, somehow."

Gualtier did not know what to make of this, but thought it only a little preliminary play, after which he would be flung headlong into the river by some catapultian kick.

"See here," said Obed; "a fellow that pretends to carry a revolver ought to be ashamed of himself for firing such shots as you did. You infernal fool, you! you've gone and lost six of the best chances any man ever had, and not one of them 'll ever come again. What is worse, you've gone and disgraced America in the person of her great national and original weapon—the everlasting revolver. Don't you feel like a fool? You know you do!"

At this extraordinary address Gualtier was, if possible, still more bewildered.

"You deserved to be caught," continued Obed, "for you tempted Providence. Providence gave you the most glorious chance I ever saw in all my born days. After using up your chance with the revolver you had this here boundless plain to run upon. Why, I've dodged a hundred Indians in my day with less of a chance, and all the odds against me, for they were firing at me. But you couldn't be shot down, for I didn't happen to feel inclined to use my revolver. It didn't seem fair." And saying this, Obed tenderly drew out his revolver from his breast-pocket, and exhibited it in a loving way to the astounded Gualtier. "I saw," he continued, "that it would be a most unscientific waste of lead. The very first shot you fired showed that you were utterly unacquainted with our American invention, and the next was as bad. Why, out of the whole six only one hit me. See here."

And Obed held up his left hand. The last joint of the middle finger had been shot off, and blood was still flowing.

Gualtier looked at this with fresh amazement.

"Why," said Obed, "if I'd had one-tenth part of your chances, and had been in your place, I'd have got off. With such a start I'd engage to escape from a dozen men. I'd drop six with the pistol, and dodge the other six. See here. Do you see that bit of woods?" And taking Gualtier's arm, he pointed to a clump of trees that rose like an island from the plain. "Do you see that?"

Gualtier said nothing.

"Well, I'll tell you what you'd ought to do. You'd ought to have made straight for that in a bee-line; then dodged behind it. Perhaps I'd have followed; but then you could have crossed to the other side, got out of sight, and while I was looking for you, off you'd get to the river. If I'd have gone on the opposite side you could have cut off among the mountains. A man," concluded Obed, in a tone of intense solemnity—"a man that could throw away such a chance as that has tempted Providence, and don't deserve any thing. Young man, you're a gone sucker!"

Gualtier heard all this, and understood this eccentric but grim address. He felt that it was all over with him. He had one desperate thought of snatching at the revolver, which Obed still held in his hand with apparent carelessness; but he saw that such an attempt would be madness. The very instant that he had looked Obed had noticed it, and understood it.

He gave a low laugh.

"You'd better not," said he, and then motioned him toward the carriage. Gualtier walked on in silence. Obed did not deign to touch his prisoner, nor did Gualtier dare to make any effort to escape. There was no chance now, since that other chance had failed; and, besides, the sight of Obed's revolver was itself sufficient to prevent such an attempt.

"You've showed considerable sense in walking quietly along," said Obed, as they came near to the carriage. "If you'd tried to run it would have been worse for you. You'd have lost a limb, *sure*."

Then Obed stopped, and forced him to look at the ground which they had gone over, and showed what excellent chances he had thrown away.

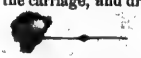
On reaching the carriage Zillah was calmer, though still greatly excited. She said nothing to Gualtier, nor did the latter venture to look at her. In the flight his wig and hat had fallen off, so that now his hated face was distinctly visible.

Obed put his hand for a moment on Gualtier's shoulder.

"Is this the man?" he asked.

Zillah bowed.

On this Obed made his prisoner get on the front seat of the carriage, and drove rapidly back to the villa.



CHAPTER LXXII.

IN PRISON.

GUALTIER was driven back to the villa, quite in ignorance as to his final destination. He was on the front seat, not bound at all, and there was one moment when there seemed a last chance of escape. It was at a time when Zillah had noticed Obed's wound, and began to question him about it with eager sympathy, while Obed tried to assure her that it was nothing. But Zillah would not be satisfied. She insisted on binding it up. She took her handkerchief, and, though she knew no more about such things than a child, prepared to do what she could. Obed soon saw her ignorance, and proceeded to give her directions. At last he took her handkerchief and tore it into several strips, with a laughing promise to tear his up some day for her. At this moment he was quite intent on Zillah, and she was absorbed in her work. It seemed to Gualtier that he was forgotten. The carriage, also, was ascending the hill. On each side were lofty trees overshadowing it, while beyond them lay a deep forest. All this Gualtier saw. Here was a last chance. Now or never might he escape. He watched for an instant. Obed was showing Zillah how to make the knot, when suddenly, with a quick leap, Gualtier sprang from the carriage seat out into the road. He stumbled and fell forward as his feet touched the road, but in an instant he recovered himself. The road-side was a steep bank, which ascended before him, covered with forests. Beyond this were the wild woods, with rocks and underbrush. If he could but get there he might find a refuge. Thither he fled with frantic haste. He rushed up the steep ascent, and in among the trees. For some distance the wood was open, and the trees rose on high at wide distances with no underbrush. Beyond that there was a denser growth. Through this he ran, stimulated by this new chance for life, and wishing that he had once again that revolver whose shots he had wasted.

As he leaped from the carriage Zillah had given a loud cry, and in another moment Obed had divined the cause and had sprung out in pursuit. Gualtier's start did not amount to more than a dozen paces. Obed also was armed. His chance of escape was therefore small indeed. Small as it was, however, it was enough to stimulate him, and he hurried onward, hearing at every pace the step of his pursuer. At length he reached the thicker part of the wood. He turned and doubled here like a fox. He did not know where to go, but sought to gain some slight advantage. He thought that he might find some place where for a few moments he might baffle his pursuer. This was the hope that now remained. Turning and doubling, therefore, and winding, he continued his flight; but the pursuer still maintained his pursuit, and as yet Gualtier had gained no advantage. In fact, he had lost ground gradually, and the underbrush had not delayed the progress of Obed. Gualtier felt this, but still strove to attain his purpose.

At last he saw a place where there was a steep precipice, thickly wooded up to its very margin and then descending abruptly. Toward this he fled, thinking that some place might show itself where he might descend, and where his pursuer might fear to follow. He bounded along in a winding direction, trying to conceal his purpose. At length he reached the edge of the precipice. At the point to which he had come the descent was abrupt, but ledges jutted out from the side of the cliff, and seemed to afford a chance for a descent to one who was bold enough to venture. There was no time for examination or for hesitation. Swiftly Gualtier ran on till he reached what seemed a favorable place, and then, throwing himself over, his feet caught a projecting ledge, and he reached down his hand to secure a grasp of a rock, so as to let himself down further. He looked down hurriedly so as to see the rock which he wished to grasp, when at that very instant his arm was seized, and a low, stern voice said:

"No go! Up with you, you scoundrel! and thank the Lord I don't blow your brains out."

He was dragged up, flung on the ground, and his hands bound tightly behind him with Obed's handkerchief. After this he was dragged back to the carriage.

So failed his last hope.

"You couldn't have done it," said Obed. "I saw it all the time. I could have shot you fifty times, but, as I knew I was going to catch you, I didn't touch my pistol. I don't blame you for making the trial. I'd have done the same. But you see now that you have got your hands tied up by way of punishment. You can't say but that I've treated you on the square, any how."

Gualtier said nothing, but was taken back and put in the carriage once more. Zillah saw that his hands were tied, and felt more secure as to the result of this second capture.

The carriage now soon reached the villa. Here Obed handed out Zillah, and gave orders to the servants to make ready the brougham. He informed Zillah that he himself intended to take Gualtier to the city and hand him over to the authorities; and that she might make her mind easy as to his capture this time, for he would not allow even an attempt at an escape again.

During these preparations Obed stood waiting near the carriage, while Gualtier sat there with his hands bound. Gladly would he have availed himself of any other chance, however desperate, but there was none. His hands were bound, his enemy was watchful and armed. Under such circumstances there remained no hope. His last attempt had been made boldly and vigorously, but it had failed. So he gave himself up to despair.

The brougham was soon ready. Obed put Gualtier inside and got in himself after him. Then they drove away. Lord Chetwynde was expected that afternoon, and he might meet him on the road. He had made up his mind, however, not to recognize him, but to let him learn the great event from Zillah herself. After giving information to his sister as to the time at which he expected to be back he drove off; and soon the brougham with its occupants was moving swiftly onward out of the villa park, down the descending road, and on toward Florence.

Obed rode inside along with Gualtier all the way. During that drive his mind found full occupation for itself. The discovery and the

capture of this man made a startling revelation of several most important yet utterly incomprehensible facts.

First, he recognized in his prisoner the man who had once visited him in New York for the purpose of gaining information about Lady Chetwynde. That information he had refused to give for certain reasons of his own, and had very unceremoniously dismissed the man that had sought it.

Secondly, this was the same man who in disguise had penetrated into his villa with all the air and manner of a spy, and who, by thus following him, showed that he must have been on his track for a long time.

Thirdly, this very man had turned out to be the long-sought Gualtier—the one who had betrayed Miss Lorton to a death from which she had only been saved by a mere accident. This was the man who had won the affections of Miss Lorton's friend, Hilda, who had induced her to share his villainy and his crime; the man who had for so long a time baffled the utmost efforts of the chief European police, yet who had at last been captured by himself.

Now about this man there were circumstances which to Obed were utterly incomprehensible.

It was conceivable that the man who had sought him in New York should track him to Florence. He might have an interest in this affair of Lady Chetwynde deep enough to inspire so pertinacious a search, so that the difficulty did not consist in this. The true difficulty lay in the fact that this man who had come to him first as the inquirer after Lady Chetwynde should now turn out to be the betrayer of Miss Lorton. And this made his present purpose the more unintelligible. What was it that had brought him across Obed's path? Was he still seeking after information about Lady Chetwynde? or, rather, was he seeking to renew his former attempt against Miss Lorton? To this latter supposition Obed felt himself drawn. It seemed to him most probable that Gualtier had somehow found out about the rescue of Zillah, and was now tracking her with the intention of consummating his work. This only could account for his twofold disguise, and his persistence in coming toward the villa after the punishment and the warning which he had once received. To think that he should run such a risk in order to prosecute his inquiry after Lady Chetwynde was absurd; but to suppose that he did it from certain designs on Miss Lorton seemed the most natural thing in the world for a villain in his position.

But behind all this there was something more; and this became to Obed the most difficult problem. It was easy to conjecture the present motive of this Gualtier—the motive which had drawn him out to the villa, to track them, to spy them, and to hover about the place; but there was another thing to which it was not so easy to give an answer. It was the startling fact of the identity between the man who had once come to him in order to investigate about Lady Chetwynde and the one who had betrayed Miss Lorton. How did it happen that the same man should have taken part in each? What should have led him to America for the purpose of questioning him about that long-forgotten tragedy, and afterward have made him the assassin which he was? It seemed as though this Gualtier was associated with the two chief tragedies of Obed's life, for this of Miss Lorton was certainly not inferior in its effect upon his feelings to that old one of Lady Chetwynde. Yet how was it that he had become thus associated with two such events as these? By what strange fatality had he and Obed thus found a common ground of interest in one another—a ground where the one was the assailant and betrayer, the other the savior and defender?

Such thoughts as these perplexed Obed, and he could not find an answer to them. An answer might certainly have been given by the man himself at his side, but Obed did not deign to question him; for, somehow, he felt that at the bottom of all this lay that strange secret which Miss Lorton had so studiously preserved. Part of it she had revealed, but only part, and that, too, in such general outlines that any discovery of the rest was impossible. Had Obed questioned Gualtier he might have discovered the truth; that is, if Gualtier would have answered his questions, which, of course, he would not have done. But Obed did not even try him. He asked nothing and said nothing during all that long drive. He saw that there was a secret, and he thought that if Miss Lorton chose to keep it he would not seek to find it out. He would rather leave it to her to reveal; and if she did not choose to reveal it, then he would not care to know it. She was the only one who could explain this away, and he thought that it would be, in some sort, an act of disloyalty to make any investigations on his own account with reference to her private affairs. Perhaps in this he might have been wrong; perhaps he might have strained too much his scruples, and yielded to a sense of honor which was too high wrought; yet, at the same time, such was his feeling, and he could not help it; and, after all, it was a noble feeling, which took its rise out of one of the purest and most chivalrous feelings of the heart.

While Obed was thus silent, thoughtful, and preoccupied, Gualtier was equally so, and at the same time there was a deep anxiety in his heart, to which the other was a stranger. To him, at that moment, situated as he was—a prisoner, under such circumstances, and in company with his watchful, grim, and relentless captor—there were many thoughts, all of which were bitter enough, and full of the darkest forebodings for the future. He, too, had made discoveries on that eventful day far darker, far more fearful, far more weighty, and far more terrible than any which Obed could have made—discoveries which filled him with horror and alarm for himself, and for another who was dearer than himself. The first of these was the great, the inexplicable fact that Zillah was really and truly alive. This at once accounted for the phantom which had appeared and stricken terror to him and to Hilda. Alive, but how? Had he not himself made assurance doubly sure? had he not with his own hands scuttled that schooner in which she was? had he not found her asleep in her cabin as he prepared to leave? had he not felt the water close up to the deck before he left the sinking yacht? had he not been in that boat on the dark midnight sea for a long time before the mutinous crew would consent to row away, so near to the vessel that any noise would

have necessarily come to his ears? He had. How, then, was this? That yacht *must* have gone down, and she *must* have gone down with it—drowned in her cabin, suffocated there by the waters, without power to make one cry. So it *must* have been; but still here she was, alive, strong, vengeful. It could not be a case of resemblance; for this woman had penetrated his disguise, had recognized him, and at the recognition had started to her feet with wild exclamations, bounding on her companion to pursuit.

But in addition to this there was something still more strange. However she may have escaped—as she must have done—by what wonderful concurrence of circumstances had she met with Obed Chute, and entered into this close friendship with him? That man was familiar with a dark past, to which she was related in some strange way. How was it, then, that of all men in the world, this one had become her friend and protector?

But, even so, there was another mystery, so strange, so dark, so inexplicable, that the others seemed as nothing. For he had discovered in her the one whom Lord Chetwynde was seeking with such zeal, and such passion, and such unfailing constancy. How was it that Lord Chetwynde had found her, and where had he found her? and if he had found her, how had he known her? Was he not living with Hilda on terms at least of respect, and acting toward her as though he believed her to be his wife? What could be the cause that had brought him into connection with Obed Chute? Obed Chute had been the confidant of Lady Chetwynde, and knew the story of her shame. How was it that the son of such a mother could associate so habitually with the man who so well knew the history of that mother? If he were not acquainted with his mother's history himself, how could he have found out Obed Chute for his friend? and if he were acquainted with it, how could he have tolerated him as such? From either point of view the question was unanswerable, and the problem insoluble. Yet the fact remained that Lord Chetwynde was in the habit of making constant visits to the house of the man, the very man, to whom the history of Lord Chetwynde's mother was known as a story of shame, and who himself had been the chief agent in helping her, as it appeared, from the ruin to which she had flung herself.

Then, again, there arose the question as to what might be the position of Zillah. How did she happen to be living with Obed Chute? In what way was she living? How did it happen that Lord Chetwynde was carrying on a series of clandestine visits to a woman who was his own wife? Hilda's story of that passionate interview in the kiosk at the Villa Rinalci was now intelligible in one sense. It was no phantom that had terrified her, but the actual form of the living Zillah herself. Yet, making allowance for this, it became more unintelligible than ever. For what could have been the meaning of that scene? If Zillah were alive and his wife, why should Lord Chetwynde arrange so elaborately this interview in the kiosk? why should he be at once so passionate and so despairing? why should he vow his vows of eternal love, and at the same time bid her an eternal farewell? What was the meaning of his information about that "other whom he hated worse than death," which Hilda had felt like a stroke of death? And why should Lord Chetwynde remain with his false wife, whom he hated, while his true wife, whom he loved, was so near? Why, in the name of Heaven, should he treat the one with even civility, and only visit the other by means of clandestine meetings and stolen interviews? Could such questions be answered at all? Were they not all mad together, or were he and Hilda madder than these? What could be the solution of these insoluble problems?

Such were the questions which filled Gualtier's mind as he drove along—questions which bewildered his brain, and to which he could not find an answer. At one time he tried to think that all these—Zillah, Lord Chetwynde, and Obed Chute—were in alliance; that they understood one another perfectly, and Hilda also; and that they were weaving together some deep plot which was to be her ruin. But this also seemed absurd. For, if they understood her, and knew who she was, why should they take any trouble to weave plots for her? That trouble they could spare themselves, and could arrest her at once whenever they chose. Why did Lord Chetwynde spare her if he knew all? Was it out of gratitude because she had saved him from death? Impossible; for he habitually neglected her now, and gave up all his thoughts and his time to Zillah. Was it possible that Zillah could have been saved, found out her husband, and was now inciting him to this strange course from some desire to get fresh proof against Hilda? No; that was impossible, for she must already have found out proof enough. The withdrawal of her money would of itself be enough to show Hilda's complicity; but her assumption of the *rôle* of Lady Chetwynde was too audacious for a true wife to bear unmoved or unconvinced.

But these things were inexplicable. He could not find even a plausible solution for such difficult problems. His excited brain reeled beneath the weight of puzzles so intricate and so complicated. He was compelled to dismiss them all from his thoughts. But though he dismissed such thoughts as these, there were others which gave occupation to his whole mind, and these at last excited his chief interest. First among these was the thought of Hilda. That very afternoon she might be coming out to carry out her plan of visiting Obed Chute, and confounding Lord Chetwynde. She would go out knowing nothing of that one whom she had doomed to death, but who was now there to confront her. She would go out, and for what? What? Could it be aught else than ruin, utter and absolute?

This was his last dark terror—all fear for himself had passed away. He feared for her, and for her alone. His love for her, and his devotion to her, which had been so often and so conspicuously tested, which had sent him on such tedious and such perilous enterprises, now, when all was over with himself, and not a ray of hope remained, made him rise above self and selfish considerations, and regard her prospects and her safety alone. The thought of her going out to the villa in utter ignorance of this new and terrific truth was intolerable. Yet what could he do? Nothing; and the fact of his own utter helplessness was maddening at such a time as this. He watched through the window, scanning all

the passers-by with feverish anxiety, which was so manifest that at length Obed noticed it, and, supposing that he was meditating some new plan of escape nearer the city, sternly reprimanded him, and drew the blinds so that nothing could be seen. And thus, with close-drawn blinds and in silence, they drove toward the city; so that if Hilda had gone along the road, Gualtier could not have seen her.

At the same time Obed, in thus shutting out Gualtier from all sight of the outside world, shut out himself also. And though Lord Chetwynde may have passed on his way to the villa, yet he could not have been seen by the occupants of the brougham, nor could he have seen them.

At last they reached Florence, and Obed drove up to the prefecture of the police. There he made his statement, and Gualtier was handed over to the authorities, and put in prison on a charge of attempted murder committed in Italian waters.

Gualtier was put into a small chamber, with whitewashed walls, narrow iron-grated window, and solid oaken doors, in which there was a small round opening. There was an iron bed here and a chair. Gualtier flung himself upon the bed, and buried his head in his hands. He felt as if he had reached the verge of despair; yet, even at that moment, it was not of himself that he thought. Far above his distress and his despair arose the power of his love, and thus turned his thoughts toward Hilda. Was she on her way out? Was she going to ruin? Or was she still at her hotel? She had not said for certain that she was going to the villa on that day; she said that she was going on that day or the next. Perhaps she had postponed it, and reserved her visit for the next. It seemed probable. If it were indeed so, then there was yet time to make an effort to save her. How could he make such an effort? How could he gain communication with her?

He rose from his bed, and watched through the opening of his door. There was a guard outside, who paced backward and forward solemnly. Gualtier's knowledge of human nature, and of Italian human nature in particular, suggested to him a way by which he might send a message. After some delay he signaled to the guard, who, after looking around cautiously, came up to his door.

"I want to send a message," said Gualtier, in the best Italian that he could muster. "It is very important. It is to a friend. I will pay well."

The guard looked interested.

"Where is your friend?" he asked.

"In the city. Can I have the message sent? I will pay two hundred piastres if I get an answer."

The guard hesitated.

"Wait," said he, after a few moments' thought; "I will see."

He went away, and was gone for about twenty minutes. When he returned he exchanged a glance of profound intelligence with Gualtier, and said:

"I think it can be done, signore."

At this Gualtier went back, and, tearing a leaf out of his pocket-book, pencilled the following words:

"A miracle has happened. *She has come to life again.* It was no phantom, but *herself* that appeared to you and me. I am in prison. Do not go out to the villa. Fly and save yourself."

Folding this up, he took it to the guard.

"If you bring back an answer to this," said he, "you shall have two hundred piastres. If you don't find the person, you shall have fifty."

Gualtier then told him the name and address of Hilda, and wrote it out for his information, charging him that it must be delivered to herself, and no other. The guard said that he could not go himself, but would send his younger brother. This satisfied Gualtier, and the guard again departed.

After some time he returned, and paced up and down as before. An hour passed. Gualtier became impatient. Then two hours elapsed. He then beckoned to the guard.

"He is gone a long time," said he.

"Perhaps he is waiting," said the guard; "if it is possible he will deliver the message."

Gualtier waited.

Three hours passed.

The guard at last came back to his door. He handed back to Gualtier the letter which he had written.

"The lady," said he, "was not at home. She had gone away. My brother waited all this time, but she did not return. Shall he go back and wait?"

"No," said Gualtier.

He gave a hundred piastres to the guard. He took his note, and tore it up. All hope faded away within him, and despair, black and dark, settled down upon his soul.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

OBED'S NEW ADVENTURE.

After leaving Gualtier in custody Obed Chute drove away from the police station with an expression of tranquil satisfaction on his fine face; such an expression as might befit one who is conscious of having done his duty to the uttermost. He drove down the Lungh' Arno, and through the Piazza, and past the Duomo. There was no further need to keep the blinds closed, and as he drove on he looked out upon the inhabitants of Florence with a grand benignity of expression to which no language can do justice. Many things conspired to fill his breast with the serenest satisfaction and self-complacency. First, he had saved himself from being humbugged. Secondly, he had been the victor in two very respectable trials of muscle, in which he, by the sheer power of muscle, had triumphed, and in the first of which his triumph had been gained over a man armed with a revolver, and using that revolver, while he very generously scorned to use his own. Thirdly, this man was the very one whom he had sought for months, and who had eluded entirely the police of Italy, France, and England. Obed also had been merciful and magnanimous in his hour of triumph. He had been too great-hearted to avail himself of any undue advantage in the strife, or to do one single act of unnecessary cruelty when that strife was over, and the victory was won. He had not bound his victim till the new flight of that victim had compelled him; nor had he spoken even one harsh word

to him. He had captured him fairly and bravely too, and in the most quiet and unostentatious manner had handed him over to the police of the country.

Of course there were some things which might have been more agreeable under the circumstances. The mystery which surrounded this man was not pleasant. It was not pleasant, after having captured him, to find himself still baffled in his endeavors to understand him or his motive; to find that this man had forced him to interweave the case of Lady Chetwynde with that of Zillah, when to his mind those two cases were as far asunder as the poles. Yet, after all, the perplexity which arose from this could not interfere with the enjoyment of his triumph. Baffled he might be, but still there was no reason why he should not enjoy the calm pleasure which arises from the consciousness of having well and fully performed a virtuous action, and of having done one's duty both to one's neighbor and one's self.

So Obed, as he drove about before going home, enjoyed the full consciousness of his own merit. He felt at peace with himself, with the world at large, and, for that matter, even with Gualtier. So long as Gualtier had baffled him and eluded his most ardent search, he had experienced the bitterest and the most vindictive feelings toward the villain who had perpetrated such foul crimes, and persisted in evading all pursuit. But now that this mysterious villain had been captured, and by himself, he felt that bitterness and vindictiveness no longer. He was satisfied that the law would administer to him the full punishment which was due to his crimes, and as far as he was concerned personally he had no feeling against him. He was simply desirous of justice.

Seated thus in his brougham he drove past Giotto's Campanile, and past those immortal gates of bronze which Ghiberti made for the Baptistery, and which Michael Angelo declared to be worthy of being the gates of Paradise. It was just at this last place, as the brougham was moving leisurely on, that his attention was arrested by a figure which was seated on the stone steps immediately outside of one of those gates. It was a woman, elderly, decrepit, and apparently poor. She was dressed in deep mourning. She was very pale, her hair was as white as snow, and her eyes looked forth with an eager, watchful, wistful expression—an expression of patient yet curious vigilance, like that of one who is waiting for some friend, or some enemy, who delays to appear. It was a memorable face—memorable, too, from its sadness, and from the eager yet almost hopeless scrutiny which it turned toward every one that passed. This was the figure that attracted Obed. He gave it one look, and that one look was enough for him.

The moment that he saw this woman an exclamation burst from him—an exclamation which was so loud that the woman heard him. She started and looked up. At that moment the brougham stopped, and Obed, tearing open the door, sprang out and hurried up the steps of the Baptistery, where the woman was sitting. She had seen him. A flush passed over her pale, ghastly face; a wild light came to her eyes. Tremblingly and with deep excitement she rose to her feet, steadying herself by grasping the bronze gateway, and looked at him with an earnest, wondering gaze.

Obed Chute came toward her quickly, yet with a certain reverential wonder in his face. The triumph and the self-complacency had all died out, and there was left nothing but a mournful surprise, with which there was also mingled a deep and inexpressible pity and sympathy.

He came nearer and nearer, still with all this on his face, while she stood awaiting him and watching him, clinging all the while to the bronze gates of Ghiberti.

"Is this possible?" said Obed, as he came near her and regarded her earnestly. "Is it possible?" he repeated, in a low, soft voice, with a deep solemnity in the tones that was far different from his usual manner. "Is this indeed *you*—and here too?"

He held out both his hands. His face softened; the hard lines seemed to fade away into a certain unspeakable tenderness, and in his eyes there was a look of infinite pity and compassion.

"Yes, it is I," said the woman, in a voice which sounded like a moan. "I am still alive—still living on—while so many who are better are dead and are at rest."

She placed one hand in his, while with the other she still clung to the gateway. The hand which she gave was shriveled and emaciated, and cold also to Obed as he felt it while holding it in both of his.

"Years have passed," said he at length, after a long and solemn silence, during which each regarded the other most earnestly—"years have passed," he repeated—"years—since you left—since I saw you last. Are you living here?" he continued, after some hesitation. "I suppose you are with one of the religious houses?"

The woman shook her head wearily.

"No," said she; "I am by myself. I am alone in the world. I am now simply 'Mrs. Hart.' I have come here on important business. It is more than important; it is a matter of life and death."

"Mrs. Hart! Is that the name that you have?" asked Obed.

"That is my name," said Mrs. Hart, wearily. "It has been my name for many years, and has done me good service."

Obed said nothing, but regarded her for a long time in silence, wondering all the while at the mysterious fate of this unhappy woman.

At last he spoke.

"Have you been here long?" he asked. "I have been here for some weeks, but I have never seen you."

"Nor have I seen you," said Mrs. Hart. "I have been here long, but I have seen no one whom I know. I am alone."

"And are you able to go alone about this business of which you speak—this business 'of life and death?' Have you any help? Is it a thing which you could commit to the police?"

"No," said Mrs. Hart. "I came here in seach of—of a friend; but I have not been able to find him."

"Are you alone, then?" asked Obed, in profound sympathy, while his face and his voice still showed the deep feeling of his heart. "Have you no one at all to help you? Is this a thing which you must do by yourself? Could not an-

"IS THIS INDEED YOU—AND HERE TOO?"

other assist you? Would it be possible for you to let me help you in this? I can do much if you will allow me—if you will again put confidence in an old friend."

Mrs. Hart looked at him earnestly, and tears started to her eyes.

"Oh, my friend," she murmured, "I believe that God has sent you to me. I see in your face and I hear in your voice that you still can feel for me. God bless you! my noble, my only friend! Yes, you can help me. There is no secret of mine which I need hide from you. I will tell you all—when I get stronger—and you shall help me. But I am very weak now," she said, wearily.

Obed looked away, and for a time said not one word. But that strong frame, which not long before had dared the shots of a desperate enemy, now trembled violently at the tears of an old woman. With a powerful effort he gulped down his emotion.

"Where are you living?" he asked, in a voice which had changed to one of strange sweetness and tenderness. "You are weak. Will you let me drive you now to your home?"

For a few moments Mrs. Hart looked at him piteously, and made no reply.

"I think it will be better for you to go home in my carriage," said Obed, gently urging her.

She still looked at him with the same piteousness.

"In what part of the city do you live?" said Obed, as he took her hand and drew it inside his arm. "Come, let me lead you to the carriage."

Mrs. Hart held back for a moment, and again looked at him.

"*I have no home,*" she said, in a voice which had died away to a whisper.

At once the truth flashed upon Obed's mind.

"I have no home," continued Mrs. Hart. "I was turned out yesterday. Last night I slept in the Boboli Gardens. For two days I have had nothing to eat."

Obed Chute staggered back as though he had received a violent blow. "O God!" he groaned, "has it come to this?"

He said not another word, but gently led Mrs. Hart to the brougham. He drove to a café first, and persuaded her to take some nourishment. Then he took her once more into the carriage, and they drove slowly out of the city.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

BEWILDERMENT.

SCARCELY any thing was said on the drive out from Florence to the villa. Tears fell frequently from the eyes of the poor wanderer as she sat wrapped in deep thought. Obed sat in silence, looking out of the window upon vacancy, seeing nothing; or, rather, seeing still that face, with its wan lips and ghastly outline, which had told so thrilling a story of homelessness and starvation. His thoughts were going back through the years —the long-vanished years. And as he thought there came over his rugged face an infinite pity and tenderness; from his eyes there beamed sadness and compassion unutterable. He kept silence thus, all that drive, because he could not trust himself to speak.

It was only when they reached the gateway of the villa that he opened his lips. Then, as they drove through, he turned toward her, and putting his hand on her arm, he said:

"Here is your home now—while you live."

"Oh, my friend!" murmured Mrs. Hart; and she could say no more.

On reaching the door Obed assisted Mrs. Hart out of the brougham, and they entered the hall. There were sounds of voices in the drawing-room, and on crossing the threshold of the villa a gentleman's voice arose in a cheerful and sprightly tone:

"Checkmated again! Really, Miss Lorton, after this you'll have to give me the odds of a pawn; you've beaten me seven games out of our last ten."

"I don't believe it was fair," said a lady's voice. "I firmly believe, and I've said it all along, that you let me beat you. Why, you taught me chess yourself, and how is it possible that I could catch up to my master in so short a time?"

"I don't pretend to account for it, Miss Lorton," said the gentleman's voice. "There, before you, is something better than theory. It is an indisputable fact. There is my king, with your queen immediately in front of him, and your rook in the distance guarding that strong-minded lady. And where is my queen? Why, gadding about with knights and bishops, when she ought to have been standing by the side of her unfortunate husband."

As these words came to her ears Mrs. Hart stood still, and one hand grasped Obed Chute's arm convulsively, while the other was pressed to her brow.

"What is this? Who are *these?* Are *they* here?" she asked, in a thrilling voice. "Am I dreaming? Is this some mockery, or are they both here? Is it some surprise? Tell me, my friend. Did you arrange all this?"

She looked at Obed in a bewildered manner. He thought that her mind was wandering.

"Come," said he, kindly, "you must go to your room now and rest, and then—"

But here a loud remark from the gentleman, followed by a merry answer from the lady, interrupted Obed, and Mrs. Hart prevented him from finishing his sentence; for suddenly she started away from him, and, without a word, hurried into the room from which the voices came. Obed stood for a moment quite confounded, and then, feeling assured that the poor creature's brain was turned, followed her hurriedly.

Mrs. Hart burst into the room, with a white face and eager, inquiring eyes. Roused by the noise of footsteps, Lord Chetwynde and Zillah turned. To the amazement of both they saw Mrs. Hart.

Had the form of General Pomeroy, or of Earl Chetwynde, appeared at that instant before them, they could not have been more confounded. Lord Chetwynde, however, was cool and calm. There was nothing in his secret which was very important, and there was therefore no fear of a discovery to disturb the unfeigned joy that mingled with his wonder at this sudden appearance of his old nurse, blended also with deep and sharp grief at the weary, wan, and wretched face that he saw before him. As to his assumed name and the revelation of his true one, that did not trouble him at all, for he could give his explanation very readily. But with Zillah it was different. Rightly or wrongly, she considered her secret a thing which should be guarded like her heart's blood; and now she saw suddenly before her the certainty of a full and grand disclosure—a disclosure, too, not merely in the presence of Obed Chute, but of Windham also. Yet even this fear, terrible as it would have been at other times, was successfully mastered, and her generous and loving nature turned away from selfish fears, with longing and joy and pity, to this dear old friend; and these feelings, mingling together at that sudden sight, drove away all others.

But now to these succeeded a new surprise, which was overwhelming. For just as she started, in obedience to her impulse, she saw Lord Chetwynde hurry forward. She saw Mrs. Hart's eyes fixed on him in a kind of ecstasy. She saw her totter forward, with all her face overspread with a joy that is but seldom known—known only in rare moments, when some lost one, loved and lost—some one more precious than life itself—is suddenly found. She saw Lord Chetwynde hurry forward. She saw Mrs. Hart run toward him, and with a low moan, a longing, yearning cry, fling herself upon his breast and clasp him in her arms.

She heard her words—words wonderful, thrilling, and beyond all understanding:

"Oh, my boy! Oh, my own! Oh, Guy! Oh, my little boy! Oh, my darling! My God! I thank Thee for this joy!"

Uttering such broken ejaculations Mrs. Hart burst into a passion of tears, and only Lord Chetwynde's strong arms prevented her from falling.

He upheld her. He kissed her. He murmured words of affection, deep and tender and true. With gentle urgency he drew her to a sofa, made her sit down by his side, and placed her head against his breast, and took her emaciated hands in his. He seemed to have forgotten the presence of others in that sudden, that overwhelming feeling of compassion for his aged, his heart-broken nurse. He was unconscious even of Zillah. In that moment his whole soul and his whole heart were turned to this wan face that leaned against his breast.

He said very little. How could he say much? A few attempts at soothing her—a few loving words—these were all. And these were enough;

for better than these was the love that was expressed in his strong embrace—the love that sustained her now, and changed despair into rapture.

"My dearest," he said—"dearest old nurse—nurse! mamma! Don't grieve now. Come, look up, and let me see your sweet old face."

His voice was broken with emotion. How he loved that one whom he called his "dear old nurse!"

"Look up, old woman. Look up. Let me see your face. You don't know how dear it is to me."

And Mrs. Hart raised her face, and in her face he read a love infinite, all-consuming, imperishable—a love which now, however, satiated and intoxicated itself in the look that she gave.

She said nothing more, but, clinging to him, she seemed to hold him to her weary heart as though she feared that something might take him away.

"Forgive me, my own; do not be angry, my dearest," she murmured, "with your poor old nurse. I left home long, long ago. I rose from my sick-bed to seek you. I came here, and have watched and watched for a long time. Oh, how long! But you never came."

"You! watching for me! here in Florence!" exclaimed Lord Chetwynde, in wonder. "My poor old dear! why?"

"I will tell you again—not now—I am too weak. Hold my hands fast, my own. Let me see your dear face—oh, how dear!"

And with her hands in his, and her eyes feeding her soul upon his face, she lay upon his breast.

Meanwhile Obed Chate had stood thunderstruck. To account for this amazing scene was so utterly impossible that he did not even attempt it. That was beyond the reach of human capacity. But he noted all that holy tenderness, and that unfathomable love which beamed from that wan, worn face, and he felt that this was not a scene for other eyes. He went softly over to Zillah, who had stood motionless hitherto, and taking her hand he led her solemnly out of the room.

They went into another apartment, and sat there in silence. Zillah was so filled with amazement that it overwhelmed her.

She had seen Mrs. Hart's joy. She had heard her give to Windham the name of "Guy." She had heard him call her those tender, well-known names—the fond names with which the letters of Guy Molyneux used always to be filled. What did all this mean?

God in heaven! Was this a dream, or a reality? Could there, indeed, be truth in this scene? Could this be possibly what it seemed to be? Was Windham Guy Molyneux?

The question was too bewildering. A thousand circumstances at once suggested themselves as that question arose. All the past came back before her, with the scenes and the words of that past. She remembered now Windham's saying that he was married, and that he hated his wife worse than death. What did this mean? Did this not coincide with what she knew of Guy Molyneux? And what was to be the end of all this? Her brain reeled at the thoughts that came to her as she asked herself this question.

For this Windham was *here*. Windham, with his devotion, his fervid passion, his burning words, his despairing love, his incessant self-watchfulness and strong self-control. Windham, who had snatched her from a dreadful death, and given glory and bliss to that heaven in life which she had known in Marseilles and in Florence; Windham, who had found in her society his highest happiness, and had spoken to her words of frenzied adoration; Windham, who had been the partner of so many stolen interviews; Windham, who once had flung aside even his honor and duty in his mad love, and urged her to fly with him to India! And could this man be Guy Molyneux? There were amazing coincidences which she could now recall. He had come home in mourning from India. He had told her of those very scenes in India of which she had read in Guy's letters. He had said that he was bound to a fate which he abhorred, and she recalled what had been her own conjectures as to what that fate might be.

At such thoughts as these she was filled with a mixture of deep joy and deadly fear. What might the end be? what could the end be?—this was the question now. Windham loved; Guy hated. Could these two men be indeed one? If they were, then how could this love and hate be reconciled? Would Windham cease to love, or Guy give up his hate? To her, also, there was still terror in the thought of Guy; and for Windham to be resolved into that man, from whom she had fled, seemed to her as though he were about to become her enemy. Yet this did not seem possible. Such confidence had she in Windham's love that the thought of his losing it, or changing, appeared the wildest improbability. No; that, at least, could not be. Still he was her own. Not yet could she blend his image with that of Guy. In her bewilderment she clung to this as her only comfort, and hoped that in some way, all this would be explained.

Meanwhile Obed had been sitting in a bewilderment equal to hers, and keeping a silence that was hard to maintain. At length he could restrain his feelings no longer.

"Can you tell," he asked at length—"can you imagine, Miss Lorton—have you the remotest idea of what in thunder is the meaning of all this?"

"I don't know," said Zillah; "I don't understand; I can't even imagine."

"And I'm—well," interposed Obed, with a blank look of despair, "the English language does not afford a word, not one single word, that can express the idea; so I will resort to the American, and merely remark that at this present moment I'm catawampously chawed up."

"Do you know Mrs. Hart?" said Zillah.

"Of course you do."

"Mrs. Hart?" asked Obed, in momentary surprise.

"Yes—her."

"Mrs. Hart? Oh, I see. Yes, I knew her many years ago. This afternoon I found her in Florence. I brought her out here. She told me that she had come here in search of a friend; but, by the living thunder, the very last person that I should have guessed at as that friend would have been Windham. And yet he was the man—the identical individual. But did you ever see such joy," he continued, after a pause, "as there was in her face at her first sight of him? Well,

when I met her she was in as deep a despair. She was crouching on the steps of the Baptistery, looking with eager eyes—hungry eyes—to find some one. And all this time it was Windham. She came here to find him, and him only. She has been here for weeks, perhaps for months, wandering about, in suffering and weakness, looking every where for Windham. She had spent all her money; she had been turned out of her lodgings; she had neither food nor shelter. For two or three days she had not eaten any thing. When I happened, by the merest accident, to find her, do you know what she was doing? She was dying of starvation, but still she was looking for Windham! And I solemnly believe that if I had not found her she would be there at this moment. Yes, she would be sitting there in misery, in want, and in starvation, still looking after Windham. And if she had died there, on that spot, I feel convinced that the last movement of her lips would have been a murmur of his name, and the last look of her dying eyes would have been for Windham. I saw all this in every look of hers, and in every word of hers that she has thus far uttered to me about her fearful experiences. I saw this; and now I beg leave to ask, in the quietest way in the world, Who is this Windham, and what is he to her?"

Here Obed ceased. He had spoken in a way that showed the deep emotion which he felt, and the sorrow and sympathy that filled his soul. As he spoke of Mrs. Hart's miseries his voice trembled. Never in his life had he met with sorrow like her sorrow. It was not this last scene in her life which gave him this feeling, but it was his knowledge of that awful past in which she had lived, and sinned, and suffered—that past whose sufferings were perpetuated still, whose lurid shadows were now projected into these later days of her life. All this he felt, and he showed it, and he sought earnestly to solve the problem which these things held out to his mind; but he could not find a solution, nor could Zillah give one. For her part, it was with unfeigned horror that she listened to Obed's recital of Mrs. Hart's sufferings and despair; yet as she listened there came to her mind the same question which had been asked by Obed, Who is this Windham? and what is he to her? Could her old devotion as the nurse of Guy account for this? Or was there some deeper cause? Had she come to save him from something? Yet from what? From danger? Yet from what danger?

And thus to each of these alike there came the same problem, yet to each there came no hope of solution.

CHAPTER LXXV.

DESPAIR.

THE time seemed long indeed to Obed and to Zillah, as they sat there in silence, wondering, bewildered, yet utterly unable to fathom the deep mystery that lay before them. Half an hour elapsed; and at last some one crossed the hall and came to the door. It was Lord Chetwynde. He looked troubled and excited.

"Miss Lorton," said he, "she wants *you*. I don't understand what she says. It is very strange. She must be out of her senses. Come in, Mr. Chute. See if you can help me out of my bewilderment."

He offered his arm to Zillah, but she did not take it. It seemed as if she did not see it. Filled with vague fears and apprehensions, she walked into the room where Mrs. Hart was, and Lord Chetwynde and Obed Chute came after her.

Mrs. Hart was lying upon the sofa. As Zillah entered she fixed her eyes upon her.

"I have been too selfish," said she. "In my joy at finding my boy so unexpectedly and so wonderfully, I have not been able to speak one word to my sweet girl. Oh, Zillah, my child, you, I know, will forgive me. But are you not amazed to see me? Yet I am still more amazed to see you. How did you come here? How is it that I find you *here*—along with my noble friend—in his house? I am all overcome with wonder. I can not understand this. I do not know what to say, or where to begin to ask the questions that I wish to ask. Mr. Chute seems a kind of Providence," she added, with peculiar emphasis in the faint tones of her weak voice—"a kind of Providence, who comes to people in their last extremities, and saves them from despair! Mr. Chute," she continued, "is my savior!" She paused for a time, and looked at Obed with a certain deep meaning in her eyes. Then she turned to Zillah again. "My child," she said, "dear, sweet Zillah! you will have to tell me all about this. Why was it that you fled away from Chetwynde? And oh! how could you have the heart to give me up to strangers?"

Amazed, speechless, overcome by wonder, Zillah could not say a word. She went to Mrs. Hart, folded her in her arms, and kissed over and over again the white lips of the woman who had once been dear to her in Chetwynde Castle.

"I do not understand it," said Mrs. Hart, feebly, and with an expression of deep amazement; "I do not comprehend all this at all. Here you all are, all of you whom I love—the only ones on earth whom I love. Here is my boy, my darling, whom I came to seek! Here is my sweet Zillah, who brightened my mournful life at Chetwynde Castle with her love and tenderness. And here I see my best friend, who came to save me from death and despair, and brought me here to life and joy and hope! What is the meaning of it all? My boy can not tell me. Say, my sweet Zillah, can not you tell me? Do you not know? Do you understand? Say, whose plan is it? Is it your plan? Who has brought us all together?"

"It is God," said Zillah, solemnly. "I do not understand how you came here. Let us thank God that you have found your friends."

She spoke at random; she knew not what to say. In her own dark perplexity she was unable to say any thing else; and when she saw that Mrs. Hart was equally perplexed, and turned to her for information, she could only find an answer in those words which were prompted by her heart. So she spoke, and she could say no more.

Nor could the others. All were silent. That white face looked wistfully from one to the other, with eager eyes, as though seeking from each some explanation; but none could give her that which she sought. In the faces that surrounded her she saw nothing else but a wonder which was fully equal to her own.

Obed Chute had now a fresh cause for bewilderment. For here was Zillah claimed fondly as a dear and loved friend by Mrs. Hart. Who was she? Was her mysterious story bound up in any way with the tragical life of the other who thus claimed her? He had been sufficiently astonished at the meeting between the woman whom he had rescued and his friend Windham; but now he saw his protégé, Miss Lorton, recognized by her as her dearest friend, and called by the most loving names—with an affection, too, which was fully returned by the one whom she thus addressed. What to think or to say he knew not. Of all the mysteries of which he had ever heard none equaled this, and it seemed to become more complicated every instant. He was at once perplexed by this insoluble problem, and vexed because it was insoluble. To his calm and straightforward mind nothing was so aggravating as a puzzle which could not be explained. He abhorred all mysteries. Yet here he found one full before him which baffled his utmost powers of comprehension—one, too, in which he himself was intermixed, and in which he saw Mrs. Windham and Miss Lorton all equally involved, and what was worse, equally in the dark.

But if Obed's bewilderment was great, what can be said of that which filled the mind of Lord Chetwynde? He saw his old nurse, whom he so deeply and even so passionately loved, turning away from himself to clasp in her arms, and to greet with the fondest affection, that beautiful girl who was dearer to him than any thing else in life. Mrs. Hart knew Miss Lorton! Above all, he was struck by the name which she gave her. She called her "Zillah!" More than this, she mentioned Chetwynde! She reproached this girl for running away from Chetwynde Castle! And to all this Miss Lorton said nothing, but accepted these fond reproaches in such a way that she made it seem as though she herself must once in very deed have lived in Chetwynde Castle, and fled from it. Mrs. Hart called her "Zillah!" To whom did that strange name belong? To one, and to one alone. That one was the daughter of General Pomeroy, whom he had married, and who was now his wife. That one he hated with a hate which no feeling of duty and no bond of gratitude could either lessen or overcome. Was he not married? Had he not seen that wife of his a thousand times? Had he not associated with her at Chetwynde Castle, at Lausanne, on the road, and in Florence? What madness, what mockery was this? It would seem as though Mrs. Hart had mistaken Miss Lorton for that detested wife who stood between him and his love. But how could such a mistake be made? True, the complexion of each was dark, and the hair of each was black, and the forms and figures were not unlike; but the features were widely different; the large, soft, loving eyes of Miss Lorton were not like those gleaming, fiery orbs that he had seen in the woman whom he thought his wife; and the expression of the face in each was as unlike as possible. Could Mrs. Hart be in a delirium? She must be mad! But then the worst of it was, that if she were mad Miss Lorton must be mad also.

"Where am I?" said Mrs. Hart, rousing herself, and breaking in upon Lord Chetwynde's thoughts. "It seems to me that I have suddenly escaped from a hell, where I have been living, and have come into heaven. Where am I? How is it that I find myself among those whom I hold most dear? Oh, my old friend! my savior! my benefactor! tell me, are you really a living being?"

"Nothing shorter," replied Obed, solemnly, "to the best of my knowledge and belief, though at the present moment I feel inclined to doubt it."

"My boy, give me your hand. Do I really hold it? Am I not dreaming?"

"No, my dear old nurse. I am really alive, and you are alive, and I am really your boy—your Guy—though hang me if I understand all this!"

"Zillah, my sweet child, give me your hand too. You have become reconciled to him, then. I see how it is. Ah! how dear you are to one another! My God! what blessedness is this! And yet I thought that you had fled from him, and left him forever. But he found you. You are reunited once more."

She placed Zillah's hand in Lord Chetwynde's, and Lord Chetwynde held it closely, firmly, in a passionate grasp, not knowing what all this meant, yet in his vehement love willing to take blindly all that might be given to him, even though it came to him through the delirium of his old nurse. He held it tightly, though Zillah in a kind of terror tried to withdraw it. He held it, for something told him in the midst of his bewilderment that it was his.

Tears flowed from Mrs. Hart's eyes. There was a deep silence around. At last Obed Chute spoke.

"My Christian friends," said he, "it's been my lot and my privilege to attend the theatre in my youthful days, and I've often seen what they call *situations*; but of all the unparalleled situations that were ever put upon the boards, from '76 down to '59, I'll be hanged if this isn't the greatest, the grandest, and the most bewildering. I'm floored. I give up. Henceforth Obed Chute exists no longer. He is dead. Hic jacet. In memoriam. E pluribus unum. You may be Mr. Windham, and you, my child, may be Miss Lorton, or you may not. You may be somebody else. We may all be somebody else. I'm somebody else. I'll be hanged if I'm myself. To my dying day I don't expect to understand this. Don't try to explain it, I beg. If you do I shall go mad. The only thing I do understand just now is this, that our friend Mrs. Hart is very weak, and needs rest, and rest she shall accordingly have. Come," he continued, turning to her; "you will have time to-morrow to see them again. Take a little rest now. You have called me your friend several times to-day. I claim a friend's privilege. You must lie down by yourself, if it's only for half an hour. Don't refuse me. I'd do as much for you."

Obed's manner showed that same tender compassion which he had already evinced. Mrs. Hart complied with his request. She rose and took his arm.

"Tell me one thing plainly," said Obed, as Mrs. Hart stood up. "Who are these? Is not this Mr. Windham, and is not this Miss Lorton? If not, who are they? That's fair, I think. I don't want to be in the dark amidst such universal light."

"Is it possible that you don't know?" said Mrs. Hart, wonderingly. "Why should they conceal it from you? These are my dearest children—my friends—the ones dear to my heart. Oh, my friend, *you* will understand me. This is Lord Chetwynde, *son of the Earl of Chetwynde*, and this girl is Zillah, daughter of Neville Pomeroy—Lady Chetwynde—his wife."

"God in heaven!" exclaimed Obed Chute. "Is this so, or are you mad, and are they mad?"

"I do not know what you mean," said Mrs. Hart. "I have spoken the truth. It is so."

Obed said not another word, but led her out of the room, with his strong brain in a state of bewilderment greater than ever, and surpassing any thing that he had known before.

Lord Chetwynde was left alone with Zillah, holding her hand, to which he still clung—though Zillah in her deep embarrassment tried to withdraw it—and looking at her with eagerness yet perplexity.

"Great Heaven!" he cried. "Do you understand this? Oh, my love! my own! my darling! What is the meaning of it all?"

"I don't know," stammered Zillah, in confusion. "Don't you know?"

"It's a mockery. It's her delirium," cried Lord Chetwynde, passionately. "Some tantalizing demon has put this into her wandering mind. But oh! my dearest, something must be true; at least you knew her before."

"Yes," said Zillah.

"Where?" cried Lord Chetwynde.

"At Chetwynde Castle," said Zillah, faintly.

"At Chetwynde Castle?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Heavens! Chetwynde Castle! What is this? Can it be a mockery? What does it all mean? You! you! You of all others! my own! my darling! *You* can never deceive me," he cried, in piercing tones. "Tell me, and tell me truly, what were you doing in Chetwynde Castle?"

"Living there," said Zillah. "I lived there for years, till the Earl died, and then I left, for certain reasons."

"Great God! What is it that you are saying?" He gasped for breath.

"Only the truth," said Zillah.

Lord Chetwynde held her hand still; his eyes seemed to devour her in the intensity of their gaze. A thousand bewildering questions were in his mind. What! Was not his wife even now in Florence? Was he not familiar with her face? What did this mean? What utter mockery was this! Yet every word of Zillah's went to corroborate the words of Mrs. Hart.

As for Zillah, she saw his embarrassment, but interpreted it falsely. "He is beginning to think," she thought, "that I am the one to whom he was married. His old hate and abhorrence are returning. He is afraid to make himself sure of it. He loves Miss Lorton, but hates the daughter of General Pomeroy. When he finds out who I am he will loathe *me*." Then while Lord Chetwynde stood silent in astonishment and bewilderment, not understanding how it was possible for these things to be, the thought flashed upon her mind about that last letter. He had loved another. Inez Cameron was his true love. She herself was nothing. Bitterly came this remembrance to her mind. She saw herself now cast out from his heart, and the love that had awakened would die out forever. And in that moment, as these thoughts rushed through her mind, as she recalled the words of that last letter, the scorn and insults that were heaped upon herself, and, above all, the fervent love that was expressed for another—as she brought these things back which had once been so bitter, one by one—hope departed, and despair settled over her heart.

But Lord Chetwynde clung to her hand. The thoughts of his heart were widely different from those of hers, and her despair was exceeded by his own. Who she was and what she was he could not understand; but the thought that he had a wife, and that his wife was General Pomeroy's daughter, was immovable in his mind.

"My darling!" he cried, in imploring tones, in which there was at the same time a world of love and tenderness; "my own darling! You know well that for you I would give up all my life and all my hope, and every thing that I have. For you, oh! my sweet love, I have trampled upon honor and duty, and have turned my back upon the holy memories of my father! For you I have stifled my conscience and denied my God! Oh! my own, my only love, listen and answer. In the name of God, and by all your hopes of heaven, I implore you to answer me truly this one question. Who are you? What is your name? How is it that Mrs. Hart has made this mistake?"

And as Lord Chetwynde gave utterance to this appeal there was in his voice an anguish of entreaty, as though his very life hung upon her answer. It thrilled to the inmost soul of Zillah, who herself was wrought up to an excitement which was equal to his, if not superior.

"Mrs. Hart has made no mistake," replied Zillah, in low, solemn tones; "she has spoken the truth. As you have asked, so must I answer. In the name of God, then, I tell you, Lord Chetwynde, that I am Zillah, daughter of General Pomeroy, and—*your wife!*"

"Oh, my God!" cried Lord Chetwynde, with a deep groan.

He dropped her hand. He staggered back, and looked at her with a face in which there was nothing else than horror.

What was then in his mind Zillah could not possibly know. She therefore interpreted that look of his from her own knowledge and suspicions only. She read in it only his own unconquerable hate, his invincible aversion to her, which now, at the mention of her true name, had revived in all its original force, and destroyed utterly the love which he had professed. All was lost! lost! lost! lost! and doubly lost! Better far never to have seen him than, having seen him and known him and loved him, to lose him thus. Such were her thoughts. Already her emotion had been overwhelming; this was the last, and it was too much. With a low moan of entreaty and of despair she wailed out the name which she loved so much. It was that word "Windham," which he had made so sweet to her.

Saying this, and with that moan of despair, she threw up her arms wildly, and sank down senseless at his feet.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

HILDA'S LAST VENTURE.

When Obed Chute came back he found Lord Chetwynde holding Zillah in his arms, pressing her to his heart, and looking wildly around with a face of agony. "Quick! quick!" he cried. "Water, for God's sake! She's fainted! She's dying! Quick!"

In a moment a dozen servants were summoned, and Zillah was plied with restoratives till she revived again. She came back to sense and to life, but hope was dead within her; and even the sight of Lord Chetwynde's face of agony, and his half-frantic words, could not lessen her despair. She implored to be carried to her room, and there she was at once taken. Lord Chetwynde's anguish was now not less than hers. With bitter self-reproach, and in terrible bewilderment, he wandered off into the west gallery, whither Obed Chute followed him, but, seeing his agitation, refrained from saying any thing. Lord Chetwynde was lost in an abyss of despair. In the midst of his agony for Zillah's sake he tried in vain to comprehend how this Miss Lorton could believe herself to be General Pomeroy's daughter and his own wife, when, as he very well knew, his own wife was at her lodgings in Florence—that wife whom he hated, but who yet had saved him from death in Switzerland, and was now living on his smiles in Italy. How could one like Miss Lorton make such a mistake? Or how could she violate all delicacy by asserting such a thing? Clearly somebody was mad. Perhaps he himself was mad. But as he felt himself to be in his sober senses, and not dreaming, he tried to think whether madness should be attributed to Mrs. Hart or Miss Lorton, on the one hand, or to his wife on the other. The problem was insoluble. Madness, he thought, must certainly be somewhere. But where? All seemed to be concerned. Mrs. Hart had recognized Miss Lorton, and Miss Lorton had returned that recognition. Somebody must be fearfully mistaken. What was to be done? In the midst of this his whole being thrilled at the recollection of those words in which Miss Lorton had claimed to be his wife. *His wife!* And she must herself have believed this at the time; otherwise she would have died rather than have uttered those words. But what would his real wife say to all this? That was his final thought.

Meanwhile Obed Chute said not a word. He saw Lord Chetwynde's emotion, and, with his usual delicacy of feeling, did not intrude upon him at such a time, though himself filled with undiminished wonder. The first excitement was over, certainly, yet the wonder remained none the less; and while Lord Chetwynde was pacing the long gallery restlessly and wildly, Obed sat meditative, pondering upon the possibilities of things. Yet the more he thought the less was he able to unravel these mysteries.

At last he thought that a walk outside would be better. A quiet smoke would assist meditation. His brain could always work more promptly when a pipe was in his mouth. He therefore went off to prepare this invaluable companion for the walk which he designed, and was even filling his pipe, when he was aroused by the entrance of a servant, who announced that a lady had just arrived, and wished to see him on very particular business. Saying this, the servant handed him her card. Obed looked at it, and read the following name:

"*Lady Chetwynde.*"

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE CRYPTOGRAM DECIPHERED.

Hitherto, and up to that last moment just spoken of, this whole affair had been one long puzzle to Obed, one, too, which was exceedingly unpleasant and utterly incomprehensible. While Lord Chetwynde had been pacing the gallery in a fever of agitation, Obed had been a prey to thoughts less intense and less painful, no doubt, but yet equally perplexing. He had been summing up in his mind the general outlines of this grand mystery, and the results were something like this:

First, there was the fact that these three were all old friends, or, at least, that two of them were equally dear to Mrs. Hart.

Secondly, that on the appearance of Mrs. Hart each was unable to account for the emotion of the other.

Thirdly, that Miss Lorton and Windham had been living under assumed names ever since he had known them.

Fourthly, that Miss Lorton and Windham had hitherto been uncommonly fond of one another's society.

Fifthly, that this was not surprising, since Windham had saved Miss Lorton from a frightful death.

Sixthly, what? Why this, that Mrs. Hart had solemnly declared that Windham was not Windham at all, but Guy Molyneux, son of the late Earl of Chetwynde; and that Miss Lorton was not Miss Lorton, but Zillah, daughter of Neville Pomeroy, and wife of Lord Chetwynde!

The Earl of Chetwynde! Neville Pomeroy! Did any of these, except Mrs. Hart, know, did they have the remotest suspicion of the profound meaning which these names had to Obed Chute? Did they know or suspect? Know or suspect? Why, they evidently knew nothing, and suspected nothing! Had they not been warm friends—or something more, as Obed now began to think—for months, while neither one knew the other as any thing else than that which was assumed?

It was a puzzle.

It was something that required an uncommon exercise of brain. Such an exercise demanded also an uncommon stimulus to that brain; and therefore Obed had gone up for his pipe. It was while preparing this that the card had come.

"Lady Chetwynde!"

His first impulse was to give a long, low whistle. After this he arose in silence and went down to the chief room. A lady was sitting there, who rose as he entered. Obed bowed low and looked at her earnestly as he seated himself.

"I hope, Sir," said the lady, in a clear, musical voice, "that you will excuse the liberty which I have taken; but the object that brings me here is one of such importance that I have been compelled to come in person. It was only of late that I learned that you were residing here, and as soon as I heard it I came to see you."

Obed Chute bowed again, but said not a word.

His bewilderment was yet strong, and he did not wish to commit himself. This lady was beautiful, and graceful in her manner. She called herself Lady Chetwynde. The name puzzled him, and, in addition to the other puzzle that had visited him on this eventful day, was hard to be borne. But he bore it bravely, and was silent. In his silence he regarded his visitor with the closest scrutiny. At the first glance he had marked her beauty. A further observation showed that she was agitated, that she was pale, and bore marks of suffering. She was a woman in distress. In the midst of Obed's perplexity the discovery of this aroused his chivalrous sympathy.

This was Hilda's last venture, and she felt it to be such. She had come out with the expectation of finding Gualtier on the road, and of receiving some message from him. She had seen nothing of him. She had waited about half an hour on the road, till she could wait no longer, and then she had gone onward. She thought that Gualtier might have failed her, but such a thing seemed so improbable that she began to fear some disaster. Perhaps he had fallen a victim to his devotion. The thought of this troubled her, and increased her agitation; and now, when she found herself in the presence of Obed Chute, her agitation was so marked as to be visible to him. Yet, as far as he was concerned, this agitation only served to favor her cause in his eyes.

"Mr. Chute," said Hilda, in low, steady tones, "I am Lady Chetwynde. I am the daughter of General Pomeroy, once Captain Pomeroy, whom you knew. He died a few years ago, and on his death-bed arranged a marriage between me and the only son of the Earl of Chetwynde. It was a sudden marriage. He insisted on it. He was dying, and his wishes could not be denied. I yielded, and was married. My husband left me immediately after the marriage ceremony, and went to India, where he remained for years. He only returned a short time ago. My father, General Pomeroy, died, and the Earl of Chetwynde took me to live with him. I lived with him for years. I was a daughter to him, and he loved me as one. He died in my arms. I was alone in the world till his son, the young Earl, came home. Pardon me for mentioning these family details, but they are necessary in order to explain my position and to prepare the way for those things which I have to say."

Hilda paused for a while. Obed said nothing, but listened with an unchanged face.

"Not long after my father's death," said Hilda, "I went to pay a visit to my old home, Pomeroy Court. I happened to look into my father's desk one day, and there I found some papers. One of them was a writing in cipher, and the rest consisted of letters written by one who signed himself *Obed Chute*, and who wrote from New York. All related to the wife of the Earl."

Hilda stopped again, and waited to see the effect of this. But Obed said nothing, nor could she see in his face any indication of any emotion whatever.

"That writing in cipher," she continued, "disturbed me. The letters were of such a character that they filled me with uneasiness, and I thought that the writing in cipher would explain all. I therefore tried to decipher it. I obtained books on the subject, and studied up the way by which such things may be unraveled. I applied myself to this task for months, and at last succeeded in my object. I never felt certain, however, that I had deciphered it rightly, nor do I yet feel certain; but what I did find out had a remarkable connection with the letters which accompanied it, and increased the alarm which I felt. Then I tried to find out about you, but could not. You alone, I thought, could explain this mystery. It was a thing which filled me with horror. I can not tell you how awful were the fears that arose, and how intolerable were the suspicions. But I could never get any explanation. Now these things have never ceased to trouble me, and they always will until they are explained.

"Yesterday I happened to hear your name mentioned. It startled me. I made inquiries, and found that a person who bore that name which was so familiar to me, and about which I had made such inquiries—Obed Chute—was living here. I at once resolved to come out and see you in person, so as to ask you what it all means, and put an end, in some way or other, to my suspense."

This recital produced a strong effect on Obed, yet no expression of his face told whether that effect was favorable or unfavorable. Earnestly Hilda watched his face as she spoke, so as to read if possible her fate, yet she found it impossible. His face remained stolid and impassive, though she saw this much, that he was listening to her with the deepest attention. What was most perplexing was the fact that Obed did not say one single word.

In fact, in this position, he did not know what to say. So he did the very best thing that he could, and said nothing. But the mystery that had begun that day with the advent of Mrs. Hart was certainly deepening. It was already unfathomable when Mrs. Hart had said that Zillah was Lady Chetwynde, and that Windham was Lord Chetwynde. Here, however, came one who made it still more hopelessly and inextricably entangled by calmly announcing herself as Lady Chetwynde; and not only so, but adding to it an account of her life. Which was the true one? Mrs. Hart could not lie. She did not seem to be insane. About Zillah there had certainly been a mystery, but she could not deceive. He began to have vague ideas that Lord Chetwynde's morals had become affected by his Indian life, and that he had a great number of wives; but then he remembered that this woman claimed to be General Pomeroy's daughter, which Mrs. Hart had also said of Zillah. So the problem was as dark as ever. He began to see that he was incapable of dealing with this subject, and that Mrs. Hart alone could explain.

Hilda, after some delay, went on:

"I have mentioned my attempt to discover the cipher writing," said she. "My deciphering was such that it seemed to involve my father in a very heavy charge. It made me think that he had been guilty of some awful crime."

"Your father, General Pomeroy?"

Obed Chute uttered this suddenly, and with deep surprise.

Hilda started, and then said, very placidly, "Yes."

"And you thought that he might be guilty of awful crimes?"

"I feared so."

"Had you lived any time with your father?"

"All my life."

Obed Chute said nothing more, though Hilda seemed to expect it; so, finding him silent, she went on without regarding him; though, if she had known this man, she would have seen that by those words she at once lost all that sympathy and consideration which thus far he had felt for her.

"On deciphering that paper of which I have spoken I found that it charged my father, General Pomeroy, with several crimes, all equally abhorrent. I will show you the paper itself, and my interpretation of it line by line, so that you may see for yourself the agony that such a discovery would naturally produce in the mind of a daughter. I will also show you those letters which you yourself wrote to my father many years ago."

Saying this, Hilda produced some papers, which she laid on the table before Obed Chute.

The first was the writing in cipher.

The second was her own interpretation, such as she had already shown to Gualtier and to Zillah.

The third was the same thing, written out line by line for the sake of legibility, as follows:

Oh may God have mercy on my wretched soul Amen
O Pomeroy forged a Hundred thousand dollars
O N Pomeroy eloped with poor Lady Chetwynde
She acted out of a mad impulse in flying
She listened to me and ran off with me
She was piqued at her husband's act
Fell in with Lady Mary Chetwynd
Expelled the army for gaming
N Pomeroy of Pomeroy Berks
O I am a miserable villain

Along with these she put down a paper which contained her key for deciphering this.

Finally she laid down those letters written by Obed Chute, which have already been given.

All these Obed Chute examined carefully. The cipher writing he looked at, compared it with the key, and then with the interpretation written by Hilda. As she looked anxiously at his face it struck her that when he took up that cipher writing it seemed as though he was familiar with it. For such a thing she was not unprepared. Obed Chute's connection with this business was mysterious to her, but it had been of such a nature that he might be able to read this paper, and know the fullness of its meaning. After reading those letters which had been written by himself—among which, however, that latest letter which Hilda had shown Zillah was not to be seen—he took up that second paper in which she had carefully written out in capitals the meaning of each line, such as has already been given, where the line is extended by characters which are not interpreted. Over this he looked long and carefully, frequently comparing it with the first paper, which contained only the cipher itself.

At length he laid down the papers and looked Hilda full in the face.

"Did it ever strike you," he asked, "that your translation was slightly rambling, and a little incoherent?"

"I have hoped that it was," said Hilda, pathetically.

"You may be assured of it," said Obed. "Read it for yourself, and think for a moment whether any human being would think of writing such stuff as that." And he motioned contemptuously to the paper where her interpretation was written out. "There's no meaning in it except this, which I have now noticed for the first time—that the miserable scoundrel who wrote this has done it so as to throw suspicion upon the man whom he was bound to love with all his contemptible heart, if he had one, which he hadn't. I see now. The infernal sneak!"

And Obed, glaring at the paper, actually ground his teeth in rage. At length he looked up, and calmly said:

"Madam, it happens that in this interpretation of yours you are totally and utterly astray. In your deep love for your father"—and here Hilda imagined a sneer—"you will be rejoiced to learn this. This cipher is an old acquaintance. I unraveled it all many years ago—almost before you were born, certainly before you ever thought of ciphers. I have all the papers by me. You couldn't have come to a better person than me—in fact, I'm the only person, I suppose, that you could come to. I will therefore explain the whole matter, so that for the rest of your life your affectionate and guileless nature may no longer be disturbed by those lamentable suspicions which you have cultivated about the noblest gentleman and most stainless soldier that ever breathed."

With these words he left the room, and shortly returned with some papers. These he spread before Hilda.

One was the cipher itself—a fac-simile of her own. The next was a mass of letters, written out in capitals on a square block. Every cipher was written out here in its Roman equivalent.

As he spread this out Obed showed her the true character of it.

"You have mistaken it," he said. "In the cipher there is a double alphabet. The upper half is written in the first, the lower half in the second. The second alphabet has most of the letters of the first; those of most frequent occurrence are changed, and instead of astronomical signs, punctuation marks are used. You have succeeded, I see, in finding the key to the upper part, but you do not seem to have thought that the lower part required a separate examination. You seem to suppose that all this mass of letters is unmeaning, and was inserted by way of recreation to the mind that was wearied with writing the first, or perhaps to mislead. Now if you had read it all you would have seen the entire truth. The man that wrote this was a villain: he has written it so that the upper part throws suspicion upon his benefactor. Whether he did this by accident or on purpose the Lord only knows. But, to my personal knowledge, he was about the meanest, smallest, sneakin'est rascal that it was ever my luck to light on. And yet he knew what honor was, and duty, for he had associated all his life with the noblest gentleman that ever lived. But I will say no more about it. See! Here is the full translation of the whole thing."

And he laid down before Hilda another paper, which was written out in the usual manner.

"If you look at the first paper," said Obed, pointing to the one which gave the translation of

each letter, above described, "you will see that the first part reads like your translation, while the lower part has no meaning. This arose from the peculiar nature of the man who wrote it. He couldn't do any thing straight. When he made a confession he wrote it in cipher. When he wrote in cipher he wrote it so as to puzzle and mislead any one who might try to find it out. He couldn't write even a cipher straight, but began in the middle and wound all his letters about it. Do you see that letter 'M' in the eleventh line, the twelfth one from the right side, with a cross by the side of it? That is the first letter. You must read from that, but toward the left, for seventeen letters, and then follow on the line immediately above it. The writing then runs on, and winds about this central line till this rectangular block of letters is formed. You supposed that it read on like ordinary writing. You see what you have found out is only those lines that happened to be the top ones, reading in the usual way from left to right. Now take this first paper. Begin at that cross, read from right to left for seventeen letters, and what do you find?"

Hilda did so, and slowly spelled out this:

"MY NAME IS NOT KRIEFF."

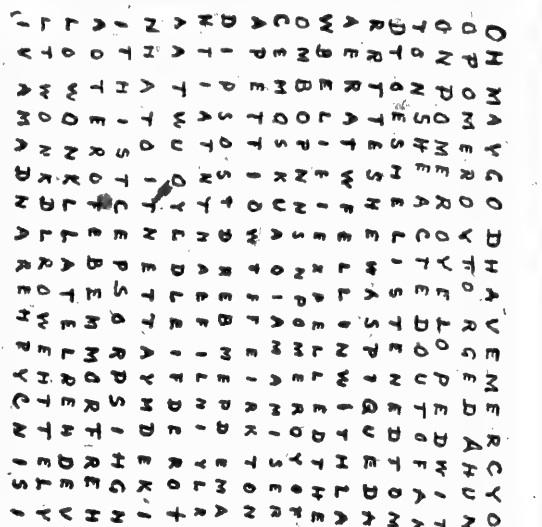
A shock of astonishment passed through her.

"Krieff?" she repeated—"Krieff?"

"Yes, Krieff," said Obed; "that was his last alias."

"Alias? Krieff?" faltered Hilda.

"Yes. He had one or two others, but this was his last."



"His? Whose? Who is it, then, that wrote this?"

"Read on. But it is not worth while to bother with this block of letters. See; I have this paper where it is all written out. Read this;" and he handed the other paper to Hilda.

She took it mechanically, and read as follows:

"My name is not Krieff. I am a miserable villain, but I was once named Pemberton Pomeroy, of Pomeroy, Berks. I fell into vice early in life, and was expelled the army for gaming. I changed my name then to Redfield Lyttoun. I fell in with Lady Mary Chetwynde. She was thoughtless, and liked my attentions. I knew

she was piqued at her husband's act in leaving his party and losing his prospects. Out of spite she listened to me and ran off with me. Neville followed us and rescued her from me before it was too late. She acted out of a mad impulse in flying, and repented bitterly. My brother saved her. Let all know that I, Pemberton Pomeroy, eloped with poor Lady Chetwynde, and that she was saved by Neville Pomeroy. Let the world know, too, that I, Pemberton Pomeroy, forged a hundred thousand dollars, and my brother paid it, and saved me. I write this in cipher, and am a villain and a coward too.

"Oh, may God have mercy on my wretched soul! - Amen."

On reading this Hilda then compared it with the other paper. She saw at once that the lines which she had translated were only fragmentary portions that happened to read from left to right. Doubt was impossible, and this which Obed Chute gave her was the truth. She laid the paper down, and looked thoughtfully away. There were several things here which disturbed her, but above all there was the name mentioned at the outset. For she saw that the man who had written this had once gone by the name of Krieff.

"I think it my duty," said Obed Chute, "to give you a full explanation, since you have asked it. The parties concerned are now all dead, and you claim to be the daughter of one of them. There is therefore no reason why I should not tell you all that I know. I have made up my mind to do so, and I will.

"Neville Pomeroy, then, was an English gentleman. I have seen much of Britishers, and have generally found that in a time of trial the English gentleman comes out uncommonly strong. I got acquainted with him in an odd kind of way. He was a young fellow, and had come out to America to hunt buffaloes. I happened to be on the Plains at the same time. I was out for a small excursion, for the office at New York was not the kind of place where a fellow of my size could be content all the time. We heard a great row—guns firing, Indians yelling, and conjectured that the savages were attacking some party or other. We dashed on for a mile or two, and came to a hollow. About fifty rascally Sioux were there. They had surrounded two or three whites, and captured them, and were preparing to strip each for the purpose of indulging in a little amusement they have—that is, building a fire on one's breast. They didn't do it that time, at any rate; and the fight that followed when we came up was the prettiest, without exception, that I ever saw. We drove them off, at any rate; and as we had revolvers, and they had only common rifles, we had it all our own way. Thirty of those Sioux devils were left behind, dead and wounded, and the rest vamosed.

"This was my first introduction to Neville Pomeroy. I cut his bonds first, and then introduced myself. He had no clothes on, but was as courteous as though he was dressed in the latest Fifth Avenue fashion. We soon understood one another. I found him as plucky as the devil, and as tough and true as steel. He seemed to like me, and we kept together on the prairies for three months—fighting, hunting, starving, stuffing, and enjoying life generally. He came with me to New York, and stopped with me. I was a broker and banker. Don't look like one, I know; but I was, and am. The American broker is a different animal from the broker of Europe. So is the American banker, one of whom you see before you.

"I won't say any thing more about our personal affairs. We became sworn friends. He went back home, and I took to the desk. Somehow we kept writing to one another. He heard of great investments in America, and got me to buy stock for him. He was rich, and soon had a large amount of money in my hands. I got the best investments for him there were, and was glad to do any thing for a man like that.

"I'll now go on straight and tell you all that you care to hear. Some of this—in fact, most of it—I did not find out till long afterward.

"Neville Pomeroy then had a younger brother, named Pemberton Pomeroy. He was an officer in the Guards. He was very dissipated, and soon got head over heels in debt. Neville had done all that he could for his brother, and had paid off his debts three times, each time saving him from ruin. But it was no use. There was the very devil himself in Pemberton. He was by nature one of the meanest rascals that was ever created, though the fellow was not bad-looking. He got deeper and deeper into the mire, and at last got into a scrape so bad, so dirty, that he had to quit the Guards. It was a gambling affair of so infamous a character that it was impossible for his brother to save him. So he quit the Guards, and went into worse courses than ever. Neville tried still to save him; he wanted to get him an office, but Pemberton refused. Meanwhile, out of a sense of decency, he had changed his name to that of Redfield Lyttoun, and under this name he became pretty well known to a new circle of friends. Under this name he made the acquaintance of the wife of the Earl of Chetwynde. It seems that the Earl was wrapped up in politics, and had offended her by giving up a great office which he held rather than act dishonorably. She was angry, and grew desperate. Redfield Lyttoun turned up, and amused her. She compromised herself very seriously by allowing such marked attentions from him, and people began to talk about them. The Earl knew nothing at all about this, as he was busy all the day. There was a sort of quarrel between them, and all her doings were quite unknown. But Neville heard of it, and made a final attempt to save his brother. I think this time he was actuated rather by regard for the Earl, who was his most intimate friend, than by any hope of saving this wretched fool of a brother of his. At any rate, he warned him, and threatened to tell the Earl himself of all that was going on. Pemberton took alarm, and pretended that he would do as Neville said. He promised to give up Lady Chetwynde. But his brother's advice had only made him savage, and he determined to carry out this game to the end. He was desperate, reckless, and utterly unprincipled. Lady Chetwynde was silly and thoughtless. She liked the scoundrel, too, I suppose. At any rate, he induced her to run away with him. For the sake of getting funds to live on he forged some drafts. He found out that Neville had money in my hands, and drew for this. I suspected nothing, and the drafts were paid. He got the money in time to run off with his victim. Silly and foolish as Lady Chetwynde was, the moment

that she had taken the inevitable step she repented. She thought that it would be impossible to retrace it, and gave herself up to despair. They fled to America under assumed names.

"Their flight was immediately known to Neville. He lost not a moment, but hurried out to America; and as the ship in which he sailed was faster than the other, he reached New York first. He came at once to me. Then he learned, for the first time, of the forgery. About one hundred thousand dollars had been drawn and paid. We took counsel together, and watched for the arrival of the steamer. Immediately on its being reported in the bay we boarded her, and Pemberton Pomeroy was arrested. He was taken to prison, and Neville induced Lady Chetwynde to come with us. I offered my house. The privacy was a most important thing. She had been freed from Pemberton's clutches, and Neville showed her that it was possible for her to escape yet from complete infamy. The suddenness of this termination to their plan startled her and horrified her. Remorse came, and then despair. All this preyed upon her mind, and with it all there came a great longing for her son, whom she had left behind. The end of it all was that she fell under an attack of brain-fever, and lingered for many months a victim to it. She finally recovered, and went into a convent. After staying there some time she suddenly left. That is the meaning of those letters which you found. Of course I kept Neville Pomeroy acquainted with these circumstances on his return.

"Meanwhile Pemberton Pomeroy had lain under arrest. Neville went to see him, and took advantage of his misery to exact from him a solemn promise never to search after Lady Chetwynde again, or interfere with her in any way. Soon after that Pemberton Pomeroy was freed, for Neville declined to appear against him, and the case dropped. Neville then went back to England.

"Pemberton Pomeroy remained. There was no more hope for him in England. The money which he had gained by his forgery he, of course, had to refund; but his brother generously gave him a few thousands to begin life on. Pemberton then disappeared for a year or two. At the end of that time he came back. He had gone to England, and then returned to America, where he had lived out West. All his money was gone. He had fallen into low courses. He had taken a wife from the dregs of the foreign population, and, as though he had some spark of shame left, he had changed his name to Krieff. He had spent his last cent, and came to me for help. I helped him, and put him in the way of getting a living.

"But he had lived a wild life, and was completely used up. When he came to me he was pretty well gone in consumption. I saw he couldn't last long. I went to see him a good many times. He used to profess the deepest repentance. He told me once that he was writing a confession of his crimes, which he was going to send to his brother. The miserable creature had scarcely any spirit or courage left, and generally when I visited him he used to begin crying. I put up with him as well as I could, though. One day when I was with him he handed me a paper, with considerable fuss, and said I was not to open it till after his death. Not long afterward he died. I opened the paper, and found that it contained only this cipher, together with a solemn request that it should be forwarded to his brother. I wrote to Neville Pomeroy, telling him of his brother's death, and he at once came out to New York. He had him decently buried, and I gave him the papers. I had taken a copy myself, and had found a man who helped me to decipher it. There was nothing in it. The poor fool had wanted to make a confession some way, but was too mean to do it like a man, and so he made up this stuff, which was of no use to any one, and could only be deciphered by extraordinary skill. But the fellow is dead, and now you know all the business."

Obed Chute ended, and bent down his head in thought. Hilda had listened with the deepest attention, and at the conclusion of this account she, too, fell into deep thought. There were many things in it which impressed her, and some which startled her with a peculiar shock.

But the one idea in her mind was different from any thing in this narrative, and had no connection with the mystery of the secret cipher, which had baffled her so long. It was not for this, not in search of this interpretation, that she had come. She had listened to it rather wearily, as though all that Obed could tell was a matter of indifference, whichever way it tended. To find that her interpretation was false had excited no very deep emotion. Once the search into this had been the chief purpose of her life; but all the results that could be accomplished by that search had long since been gained. The cipher writing was a dead thing, belonging to the dead past. She had only used it as a plausible excuse to gain admittance to the villa for a higher purpose.

The time had now come for the revelation of that purpose.

"Sir," said she, in a low voice, looking earnestly at Obed Chute, "I feel very grateful to you for your great kindness in favoring me with this explanation. It has been hard for me to have this interpretation of mine in any way affect my father's memory. I never could bring myself to believe it, knowing him as I knew him. But, at the same time, the very idea that there was such a charge in writing disturbed me. Your explanation, Sir, has made all clear, and has set my mind at rest in that particular.

"And now, Sir, will you excuse me if I mention one more thing which I would like to ask of you. It concerns me, you will see, even more closely than this writing could have concerned me. It touches me in a more tender place. It is very strange, and, indeed, quite inexplicable, why you, Sir, a stranger, should be interwoven with these things which are so sacred to me; but so it is."

Obed was affected by the solemnity of her tone, and by a certain pathos in her last words, and by something in her manner which showed a deeper feeling by far than she had evinced before.

What Hilda now proceeded to say she had long thought over, and prepared with great deliberation. No doubt the woman whom Lord Chetwynde loved lived here. Most probably she was Obed Chute's young wife, possibly his daughter; but in any case it would be to him a terrible disclosure, if she, Lord Chetwynde's wife, came and solemnly informed him of the intrigue that was going on. She had made up her mind, then, to disclose this, at all hazards, trusting to circumstances for full and complete satisfaction.

"'YES,' HE CRIED, 'I'LL HAVE THIS CLEARED UP NOW, ONCE AND FOREVER.'"

"Sir," she continued, in a voice which expressed still deeper emotion, "what I have to say is something which it pains me to say, yet it must be said. I am Lady Chetwynde, and traveled here with Lord Chetwynde, who is the only acquaintance I have in Florence. I hurried from England to his sick-bed, in Switzerland, and saved his life. Then I came here with him.

"Of late I have been suspicious of him. Some things occurred which led me to suppose that he was paying attentions to a lady here. My jealousy was aroused. I learned, I need not say how, that he was a constant visitor here. I followed him to a masquerade to which he refused to take me. I saw him with this lady, whose face I could not see. They left you. They walked to an arbor. I listened—for, Sir, what wife would not listen?—and I heard him make a frantic declaration of love, and urge her to fly with him. Had I not interrupted them at that moment they might have fled. Oh, Sir, think of my lonely condition—think what it costs my pride to speak thus to a stranger. Tell me, what is this? Is it possible, or do I dream? Tell me, do you know that my husband loves this woman?"

The emotion with which Hilda spoke grew stronger. She rose to her feet, and took a step nearer to Obed. She stood there with clasped hands, her beautiful face turned toward him with deep entreaty.

Obed looked at her in a fresh bewilderment. He was silent for a long time. At last he started to his feet.

"Well, marm," said he, as he clenched his fist, "I don't understand. I can't explain. Every thing is a muddle. All I can say is this—there's either treachery or insanity somewhere, and may I be cut up into sausages and chawed up by Comanches if I'll stand this any longer. Yes," he cried, "by the Lord! I'll have this cleared up now, once and forever. I will, by the Eternal!"

He brought his huge fist down with a crash on the table, and left the room.

Hilda sat waiting.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

"THE WIFE OF LORD CHETWYNDE."

Hilda sat waiting.

Obed had gone in search of those who could face this woman and answer her story. He went first to send word to Zillah, summoning her

down. Zillah had been feebly reclining on her couch, distracted by thoughts at once perplexing and agonizing, filled with despair at the dark calamity which had suddenly descended, with a black future arising before her, when she and "Windham" were to be sundered forever. He hated her. That was her chief thought; and Windham's love had gone down in an instant before Guy's deadly abhorrence. A lighter distress might have been borne by the assistance of pride; but this was too overmastering, and pride stood powerless in the presence of a breaking heart. In such a mood as this was she when the message was brought to her which Obed had sent.

The wife of Lord Chetwynde was down stairs, and wished to see her!

The wife of Lord Chetwynde!

Those words stung her like serpents' fangs; a tumult of fierce rage and jealousy at once arose within her; and at this new emotion her sorrow left her, and the weakness arising from her crushed love. With a start she rose to her feet, and hastily prepared to descend.

After summoning Zillah, Obed went in search of Lord Chetwynde. Some time elapsed before he could find him. He had been wandering about the grounds in a state bordering on distraction.

Meanwhile Hilda sat waiting.

Alone in the great room, where now the shadows were gathering, she was left to her own dark reflections. The sufferings through which she had passed had weakened her, and the last scene with Obed had not been adapted to reassure her or console her. The state of suspense in which she now was did not give her any fresh strength. Her nervous system was disorganized, and her present position stimulated her morbid fancy, turning it toward dark and sombre forebodings. And now in this solitude and gloom which was about her, and in the deep suspense in which she was waiting, there came to her mind a thought —a thought which made her flesh creep, and her blood run chill, while a strange, grisly horror descended awfully upon her. She could not help remembering how it had been before. Twice she had made an effort to anticipate fate and grasp at vengeance—once by herself alone, and once in the person of Gualtier. Each attempt had been baffled. It had been frustrated in the same way precisely. To each of them there had come that fearful phantom figure, rising before them awfully, menacingly, with an aspect of terrible import. Well she remembered that shape as it had risen before her at the pavilion—a shape with white face, and white clothing, and burning eyes—that figure which seemed to emerge from the depths of the sea, with the drip of the water in her dark, dank hair, and in her white, clinging draperies. It was no fiction of the imagination, for Gualtier had seen the same. It was no fiction, for she recalled her horror, and the flight through the forest, while the shape pursued till it struck her down into senselessness.

A shudder passed through her once more at the recollection of these things. And there arose a question of awful import. Would *it* come again? Now was the third attempt—the fateful third! Would she again be baffled, and by *that?* She feared no human foe; but this horror was something which she could never again encounter and live. And there came the terror over her that she might once again see this.

She was alone amidst her terrors. It was growing late. In the great room the dimness was deepening, and the furniture looked ghostly at the farther end of the apartment. It was not long since Obed had gone, but the time seemed to her interminable. It seemed to her as though she were all alone in the great house. She struggled with her fancies, and sat looking at the door fixedly, and with a certain awful expectation in her eyes.

Then, as she looked, a thrill flashed through all her being. For there, slowly and noiselessly, a figure entered—a figure which she knew too well. Robed in white it was; the face was pale and white as the dress; the hair was thick and ebon black, and hung down loosely; the dress clung closely. Was it the drip of the sea-wave—was it the wet clothing that thus clung to the figure which had once more come from the dark ocean depths to avenge her own cause? There, in very deed, stood the shape of horror—

> "her garments
> Clinging like cerements,
> While the wave constantly
> Dripped from her clothing."

It was *she*. It was the one who had been sent down to death beneath the waters, but who now returned for the last time, no longer to warn or to baffle, but to change from victim to avenger!

The anguish of that moment was greater far than all the agonies which Hilda had ever known. Her heart stopped beating; all life seemed to ebb away from the terror of that presence. Wildly there arose a thought of flight; but she was spellbound, her limbs were paralyzed, and the dark, luminous eyes of the horror enchained her own gaze. Suddenly she made a convulsive effort, mechanically, and sprung to her feet, her hands clutching one another in a kind of spasm, and her brain reeling beneath such thoughts as make men mad. In that deep agony a groan burst from her, but she spoke not a word as she stood there rooted to the spot.

As for Zillah herself, she, on entering, had seen Hilda, had recognized her, and was stricken dumb with amazement. That amazement made her stop and regard her, with wild, staring eyes, in utter silence. There had been only one thought in her mind, and that was to see who it could possibly be that dared to come here with the pretense of being "Lord Chetwynde's wife." In her eagerness she had come down in a rather negligé costume, and entering the room she found herself thus face to face with Hilda. At that sight a thousand thoughts flashed at once into her mind. In a moment she had divined the whole extent of Hilda's perfidy. Now she could understand fully the reason why Hilda had betrayed her; why she had formed so carefully contrived and so elaborate a plot, which had been carried out so patiently and so remorselessly. That sight of Hilda showed her, too, what must have been the height and the depth and the full extent of the plot against her young, undefended life—its cruelty, and the baseness of its motive. It was to take her place that Hilda had betrayed her. Out of such a motive had arisen such foul ingratitude and such deadly crime. Yet in her

generous heart, while her mind understood this much, and her judgment condemned this vile traitor, the old habit of tenderness awakened at the sight of the familiar face, once so dear. Dearly had she loved her, fondly had she trusted her; both love and faith had been outraged, and the friend had doomed to death the unsuspecting friend; yet now even this last wrong could not destroy the old love, and her thoughts were less of vengeance than of sad reproach. Involuntarily a cry escaped her.

"Oh, Hilda! Hilda!" she exclaimed, in a voice of anguish, "how could you betray [illegible] Zillah!"

To Hilda's excited and almost [illegible] these words seemed like reproaches flung out by the dead—the preliminaries to the awful doom which the dead was about to pronounce [illegible] flict. She trembled in dread anticipation, and in a hoarse, unnatural voice, and in scarce audible words, gasped out,

"What do you want?"

For a few moments Zillah said not a word, though those few moments seemed like hours to Hilda. Then, with a sudden impulse, she advanced toward her. Her impulse was one of pity and kindliness. She could not help seeing the anguish of Hilda. For a moment she forgot all but this, and a vague desire to assure her of forgiveness arose within her. But that movement of hers was terrible to Hilda. It was the advance of the wrathful avenger of blood, the irresistible punisher of wrong; the advent of a frightful thing, whose presence was horror, whose approach was death. With a wild shriek of mortal fear she flung up her arms, as if to shut out that awful sight, or to avert that terrible fate, and then, as though the last vestige of strength had left her utterly, she staggered back, and sank down, shuddering and gasping for breath, into her chair, and sat there with her eyes fixed on Zillah, and expressing an intensity of fear and apprehension which could not be mistaken. Zillah saw it. She stopped in wonder, and thus wondering, she stood regarding her in silence.

But at this moment footsteps were heard, and Obed Chute entered, followed by Lord Chetwynde.

Obed had but one thought in his mind, and that was to unravel this mystery as soon as possible; for the presence of such an inexplicable mystery as this made him feel uncomfortable and humiliated. Until this was explained in some way he knew that he would be able to find rest neither by night nor by day. He was, therefore, resolved to press things forward, in hopes of getting some clew at least to the labyrinth in which his mind was wandering. He therefore took Lord Chetwynde by the arm and drew him up before her. She drew a long breath, and all the vigor of her strong soul returned.

But on the others the effect of Zillah's words was overwhelming. Obed Chute started back in amazement at this revelation, and looked wonderingly upon this woman, who had but lately been winning his sympathy as an injured wife; and he marveled greatly how this delicate, this beautiful and high-bred lady, could, by any possibility, be identified with that atrocious monster whose image had always existed in his mind as the natural form of Zillah's traitorous friend.

On Lord Chetwynde the effect of all this,

her whole frame trembling, and all her soul on fire, as it kindled with the fury of her passionate indignation.

"*Her* husband!" she exclaimed, with infinite passion and unutterable contempt—"*her* husband! Say, Mr. Chute, do you know who it is that you see before you? I will tell you. Behold, Sir, the woman who betrayed me; the false friend who sought my life, and, in return for the love and confidence of years, tried to cast me, her friend, to death. This, Sir, is the woman whom you have been so long seeking, herself—the paramour of that wretch, Gualtier—my betrayer and my assassin—*Hilda Krieff*."

These words were flung forth like lava-fire, scorching and blighting in their hot and intense hate. Her whole face and manner and tone had changed. From that gentle girl who, as Miss Lorton, had been never else than sweet and soft and tender and mournful, she was now transformed to a wrathful and pitiless avenger, a baleful fury, beautiful, yet terrific; one inspired by love stronger than death, and jealousy as cruel as the grave; one who was now pitiless and remorseless; one whose soul was animated by the one feeling only of instant and implacable vengeance. The fierceness of that inexorable wrath glowed in her burning eyes, and in the rigid outstretched arm with which she pointed toward Hilda. In this moment of her fervid passion her Indian nature was all revealed in its hot, tempestuous, unreasoning fury; and the Zillah of this scene was that same Zillah who, years before, had turned away from the bedside of her dying father to utter those maledictions, those taunts, and those bitter insults, which Lord Chetwynde so well remembered.

Yet to Hilda at that instant these words, with all their fury and inexorable hate, came like balm and sweetness, like the gentle utterances of peace and calm. They raised her up at last from that great and unendurable horror into which she had fallen; they brought back her vanished strength; they restored her to herself. For they showed her this one thing plainly, and this above all things, that it was not the dead who stood thus before her, but the living! Had her former suspense been delayed a few moments more she would have died in her agony; but now the horror had vanished; the one before her bore no longer the terrors of the unseen, but became an ordinary living being. It was Zillah herself, not in death as an apparition, but in life as a woman. She cared nothing for the hate and the vengeance, nothing for the insult and the scorn. She cared nothing for the mystery that enshrouded Zillah, nor was it of any consequence to her then how she had been saved. Enough was it that Zillah was really alive. At this she revived. Her weakness left her.

"These words stung Zillah to the soul. In an instant all pity and all tenderness toward Hilda vanished utterly. All her baseness arose before her, unredeemed by any further thought of former love or of her present misery. She sprang forward, her eyes flashing, her hands clenched,

"Now," he said, abruptly, turning to Hilda, "I have brought the man you wish to see. Here he is before you, face to face. Look at him and answer me. Is this man your husband?"

though equally great, was different. One look at Hilda in her first consternation and horror, and another at Zillah in her burning passion, had been enough. As Zillah finished, he caught her outstretched hand as it was pointing toward Hilda, and there rushed through all his being a rapture beyond words, as a dim perception of the truth came to his mind.

"Oh, my darling!" he cried, "say it again. Can this be possible? Is *she*, then, an impostor? Have I, indeed, been blinded and deceived all this time by her?"

Zillah tore her hand away from his grasp. In that moment of fury there came to her a thousand jealous fears to distract her. The thought that he had been so far deceived as to actually believe this woman his wife was intolerable. There was a wrathful cloud upon her brow as she turned her eyes to look at him, and in those eyes there was a glance, hard, stern, and cold, such as might befit an outraged and injured wife. But as she thus turned to look at him the glance that met hers was one before which her fury subsided. It was a glance upon which she could not look and cherish hate, or even coldness; for she saw in his face a wild rapture, and in his eyes a gleam of exultant joy, while the flushed cheeks and the ecstatic smile showed how deeply and how truly he loved her. On that face there was no cloud of shame, no trace of embarrassment, no sign of any consciousness of acts that might awaken her displeasure. There was nothing there but that old tenderness which she had once or twice seen on the face of Windham—a tenderness which was all for her. And she knew by that sign that Guy was Windham; and being Windham, he was hers, and hers alone. At this all her hardness, and all her anger, and all the fury of her passion were dispelled as quickly as they had arisen, and a great calm, full and deep, came over all her being. He loved her! That was enough. The fears which had tormented her since Mrs. Hart's revelation, the fury which had arisen but a few moments ago at the dark promptings of jealousy, were now all dispelled, and she saw in Lord Chetwynde her own Windham.

Quickly and swiftly had these thoughts and feelings come and gone; but in that moment, when Zillah's attention was diverted to Lord Chetwynde, Hilda gained more of her self-command. All was lost; but still, even in her despair, she found a fresh strength. Here all were her enemies; she was in their power and at their mercy; her very life was now at their disposal; they could wreak on her, if they chose, a full and ample vengeance; yet the thought of all this only strengthened her the more, for that which deepened her despair only intensified her hate. And so it was that at this last moment, when all was lost, with her enemies thus before her, the occasion only served to stimulate her. Her strength had returned; she summoned up all her energies, and stood grandly at bay. She rose to her feet and confronted them all—defiant, haughty, and vindictive—and brought against them all the unconquerable pride of her strong and stubborn nature.

"Tell me again," said Obed Chute, "what name was it that you gave this woman?"

"I am Zillah, daughter of General Pomeroy, and this woman is Hilda Krieff," was the reply.

"Hilda—Hilda—Hilda Krieff! Hilda Krieff!" said Obed Chute. "My good Lord!"

But Hilda did not notice this, nor any thing else.

"Well," she said, in a cold and bitter tone, "it seems that I've lost the game. Amen. Perhaps it's just as well. And so you're alive, after all, are you, Zillah, and not in the sea? Gualtier, then, deceived me. That also is, after all, just as well."

"Wretched woman," said Lord Chetwynde, solemnly, "Gualtier did not deceive you. He did his work. It was I who saved her from death. In any case, you have the stain of murder on your soul."

"Perhaps I have, my lord," said Hilda, coolly, "and other stains also, all of which make it highly inappropriate for me to be your wife. You will, however, have no objection to my congratulating you on the charming being you have gained, and to whom you have addressed such very passionate vows."

"This woman," said Lord Chetwynde, "hardly deserves to be treated with ordinary civility. At any rate, she is not fit for *you*," he added, in a low voice, to Zillah; "and you are too agitated for further excitement. Shall I lead you away?"

"Not yet," said Zillah, "till I have asked one question. Hilda Krieff," she continued, "answer me one thing, and answer me truly. What was it that made you seek my death? Will you answer?"

"With pleasure," said Hilda, mockingly. "Because I hated you."

"Hated me!"

"Yes, hated you always, intensely, bitterly, passionately."

"And why? What had I ever done?"

"Nothing. The reason of my hate was in other things. I will tell you. Because I was your father's daughter, and you supplanted me."

"You! Impossible!"

"I will tell you. In my childhood he was fond of me. I was taken to India at an early age. After you were born he forgot all about me. Once I was playing, and he talked to me with his old affection. I had a locket around my neck with this name on it—'*Hilda Pomeroy.*' He happened to look at it, and read the name. 'Ah,' said he, 'that is a better name than Hilda Krieff. My child, I wish you could wear that name.' I wanted him to tell me what he meant, but he wouldn't. At another time he spoke of you as being my 'little sister.' He frequently called me daughter. At last I found some old papers of my mother's, when I saw that her name was Hilda Pomeroy, and then I understood it all. She was his first wife, though I believe now that they were not married. He, of course, deceived her, and though she thought she was his wife, yet her child could not take his name. I asked him this, but he refused to explain, and warned me never to mention the subject. This only showed me still more plainly the miserable truth.

"Years passed. I found myself driven out from my father's affections. You were the world to him. I, his eldest daughter, was nothing. You were his heiress. Good God! woman, do you think I could help hating one who calmly appropriated every thing that ought to be mine?

"Now you know about as much as you need

know. I began years ago to plan against you, and kept it up with never-failing patience. It was the only pleasure I had in life. I won't go into particulars. I'll only say that nearly all your troubles came through my management. From time to time hereafter you will gradually remember various things, and think with tender regret upon your loving Hilda.

"At last things were all ripe, and I slipped away. I got you out of the way also, and I frankly avow that I never expected to have the pleasure of seeing you again. I also hoped that Lord Chetwynde would not come back from India. But he came, and there is where I broke down. That is all I have to say."

Hilda stopped, and looked defiantly at them.

"Young woman," said Obed Chute, in calm, measured tones, "you are very aggravating. It is well that you have generous people to deal with. I don't know but that I ought to take you now and hand you over to the police, to be lodged in the same cell with your friend Gualtier; but—"

"Gualtier!" groaned Hilda. "What?"

"Yes, Gualtier. I caught him yesterday, and handed him over to the police."

Hilda looked around wildly, and with a deeper despair in her heart.

"You," continued Obed, "are much worse than he. In this business he was only your tool. But you're a woman, and are, therefore, sacred. You are safe. It would be better, however, and much more becoming in you, to refrain from that aggravating way of speaking which you have just used. But there is one question which I wish to ask; and then our interview will terminate:

"You say you believe yourself to be the elder daughter of General Pomeroy?"

"Yes."

"Do you know your mother's maiden name?"

"Yes. Hilda Krieff."

"Did she ever tell you about her marriage?"

"I was too young when she died."

"Did you ever see any record of her marriage?"

"No."

"You know nothing definite about it, then?"

"No."

"Well, then, allow me to inform you that you are as much astray here as you were in that other thing. This Hilda Krieff was the wife of Pemberton Pomeroy—married after his elopement business. He took *her* name. You were their daughter. I saw you once or twice when visiting him. You were then a baby. Neville Pomeroy took charge of your mother and you after your father's death. These are the facts of the case."

"What is all this?" cried Zillah, eagerly, as she heard these names. "Do *you* know about papa?"

"This lady came here with some questions about a cipher writing which she had misunderstood, and I explained it all. She thought the General was guilty, but I explained that he was the best fellow that ever lived. It's too long to tell now. I'll explain it all to you to-morrow."

"Oh, thank God!" murmured Zillah.

"What! *you* couldn't have believed it?" cried Obed Chute.

"Never! never!" said Zillah; "though *she* tried hard to make me."

Hilda had no more to say. The news about Gualtier, and the truth as to her parentage, were fresh shocks, and already her strength began to give way. Her spirit could not long be kept up to that height of audacity to which she had raised it. Beneath all was the blackness of her despair, in which was not one ray of hope.

She rose in silence. Obed accompanied her to her carriage, which was yet waiting there. Soon the wheels rattled over the gravel, and Hilda drove toward Florence.

Obed walked out and sauntered through the grounds. There was a twinkle in his eye. He walked on, and on, till he reached a place in the depths of the woods far away from the villa.

Then he gave utterance to his feelings.

How?

Did he clench his fists, curse Heaven, weep, and rave?

Not he; not Obed.

He burst forth into peals of stentorian laughter.

"Oh, dear!" he screamed. "Oh, creation! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Oh, Lord! making love on the sly! getting spooney! taking romantic walks! reading poetry! and all to his own wife! Oh, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha! And he stole off with her at the masquerade, and made a 'passionate declaration'—to his—good thunder!—his *wife! his own wife!* Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! I'll never get over this!"

He certainly did not get over it for at least two hours.

He had at last fully comprehended the whole thing. Now the true state of mind between the quondam Windham and Miss Lorton became evident. Now he began to suspect how desperately they had been in love. A thousand little incidents occurred to his memory, and each one brought on a fresh explosion. Even his own proposal to Zillah was remembered. He wondered whether Windham had proposed also, and been rejected. This only was needed to his mind to complete the joke.

For two hours the servants at the villa heard singular noises in the woods, and passers-by heard with awe the same mysterious sounds. It was Obed enjoying the "joke." It was not until quite late that he had fully exhausted it

CHAPTER LXXIX.

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

MEANWHILE Lord Chetwynde and Zillah were left together. A few hours before they had been sitting in this same room, alone, when Mrs. Hart entered. Since then what wonders had taken place! What an overturn to life! What an opening into unlooked-for happiness! For a few moments they stood looking at one another, not yet able to realize the full weight of the happiness that had come so suddenly. And as they looked, each could read in the face of the other all the soul of each, which was made manifest, and the full, unrestrained expression of the longing which each had felt.

Lord Chetwynde folded her in his arms.

"What is all this?" he said, in a low voice. "What can it mean? I can not yet believe it; can you? What, my darling, are we not to have

our stolen interviews any more? Have we no longer our great secret to keep? Are you really mine? I don't understand, but I'm content to hold you in my arms. Oh, my wife!"

Zillah murmured some inaudible protest, but her own bewilderment had not yet passed away. In that moment the first thought was that her own Windham was at last all her own in very truth.

"And are you sure," she said at last, "that you have got over your abhorrence of me?"

Lord Chetwynde did not understand this question, but considering it a joke, he responded in the customary manner.

"But what possible means could have induced you to leave Chetwynde Castle at all?" he asked; for, as he had not yet heard her story, he was all in the dark.

"Because you wrote that hideous, that horrible letter," said Zillah; and as the memory of that letter came to her she made an effort to draw away from his embrace. But the effort was fruitless.

"Hideous letter! What letter?"

"The last one."

"My darling, I don't know what you mean."

"Don't you remember how you reviled me?"

"I didn't; I don't understand."

"You called me a Hindu, and an imp."

"Good Heavens! what do you mean?"

"But you do not hate me *now*, do you? Tell me, and tell me truly, are you sure that your abhorrence has all passed away?"

"Abhorrence!"

"Ah! you need not fear to confess it now. You did abhor me, you know."

"On my honor, I do not know what you are talking about, my own darling. I never wrote about you except with respect; and that, too, in spite of those awful, cutting, sneering letters which you wrote for years, and that last one, written after my father's death."

"Heavens! what do you mean?" cried Zillah, aghast. "I sent letters to you regularly, but I never wrote any thing but affectionate words."

"Affectionate words! I never received a letter that was not a sneer or an insult. I came home under an assumed name, thinking that I would visit Chetwynde unknown, to see what sort of a person this was who had treated me so. I changed my intention, however, and went there in my own name. I found that woman there—an impostor. How was I to know that? But I hated her from the outset."

"Ah," said Zillah, "you were then full of memories of Inez Cameron."

This thought had suddenly stung her, and, forgetting the Windham of Marseilles, she flung it out.

"Of what? Inez? What is that?" asked Lord Chetwynde, in a puzzle.

"Inez Cameron."

"Inez Cameron! Who is Inez Cameron?"

"Inez Cameron," said Zillah, wondering—"that fair companion of so many evenings, about whom you wrote in such impassioned language—whose image you said was ever in your heart."

"In the name of Heaven," cried Lord Chetwynde, "what is it that you mean? Who is she?"

"Captain Cameron's sister," said Zillah.

"Captain Cameron's sister?"

"Yes."

"Captain Cameron has no sister. I never saw any one named Inez Cameron. I never mentioned such a name in any letter, and I never had any image in my heart except yours, my darling."

"Why, what does it all mean?"

"It means this," said Lord Chetwynde, "that we have for years been the victims of some dark plot, whose depths we have not yet even imagined, and whose subtle workings we have not yet begun to trace. Here we are, my darling, asking questions of one another whose meaning we can not imagine, and making charges which neither of us understand. You speak of some letter which I wrote containing statements that I never thought of. You mention some Inez Cameron, a lady whom I never heard of before. You say also that you never wrote those letters which imbittered my life so much."

"Never, never. I never wrote any thing but kindness."

"Then who wrote them?"

"Oh!" cried Zillah, suddenly, as a light burst on her; "I see it all! But is it possible? Yes, that must be it. And if you did not write that last letter, then *she* wrote it."

"*She!* Who?"

"Hilda."

Hereupon ensued a long explanation, the end of which was that each began to understand better the state of the case. And Lord Chetwynde exulted at finding that all the baseness which he had imagined against his wife was the work of another; and Zillah felt ecstasy in the thought that Lord Chetwynde had never loathed her, and had never carried in his despairing heart the image of that dreaded and hated phantom, Inez Cameron.

"The fact is, I couldn't have written that letter for another reason, little girl. I always made allowances even for those letters which you did not write, and until that last one came I always laid great stress on my father's love for you, and hoped some day to gain your love."

"And that you would have done in the ordinary way if we had met in Chetwynde Castle."

"Would I, indeed?"

"Yes," sighed Zillah; "for I think I learned to love you from your letters to your father."

"Oh no! no, no," laughed Lord Chetwynde; "for did you not at once fall in love with that Windham?"

So the time passed.

But amidst these murmurs of affection, and these explanations of vanished mysteries, Lord Chetwynde caught himself looking to the past few months at Florence.

"Oh, those interviews!" he murmured, "those sweet, stolen interviews!"

"Why, Sir," said Zillah, "you speak as though you feel sorry for all this!"

"No, my darling. My fond recollection of these can not interfere with my joy at the present; for the great meaning of this present is that while we live we shall never part again."

Lord Chetwynde did not go back to Florence that night. There were a thousand things to talk over. On the following day Obed explained all about the cipher, and told many stories about

his early association with Neville Pomeroy. These things took up all the next day. Lord Chetwynde was in no hurry now. His Indian appointment was quietly given up. He had no immediate desire to go to his lodgings, and Obed insisted that Lord and Lady Chetwynde should be his guests during their stay in Florence.

To this Lord and Lady Chetwynde agreed, and enforced a promise from Obed Chute that he would be their guest in Chetwynde Castle.

Sometimes their thoughts turned on Hilda. They had no desire to pursue her. To Zillah she was an old friend; and her treason was not a thing which could be punished in a court of justice. To Lord Chetwynde she was, after all, the woman who had saved his life with what still seemed to him like matchless devotion. He knew well, what Zillah never knew, how passionately Hilda loved him. To Obed Chute, finally, she was a *woman*, and now undeniably a woman in distress. That was enough. "Let the poor thing go; I half wish that I could save her from going to the devil." Such were his sentiments.

On the second day Lord Chetwynde drove in to his rooms. He returned looking very pale and grave. Zillah, who had gone out smilingly to greet him, wondered at this.

"We talked about sparing her," said he, softly. "My darling wife, she is beyond our reach now."

Zillah looked at him with fearful inquiry.

"She has gone—she is dead!"

"Dead!" cried Zillah, in a voice of horror.

"Yes, and by her own hand."

Lord Chetwynde then told her that on reaching his rooms he was waited on by the *concierge*, who informed him that on the previous day the lady whom the *concierge* supposed to be his wife was found dead in her bed by her maid. No one knew the cause. The absence of her husband was much wondered at. Lord Chetwynde was so much shocked that his deportment would have befitted one who was really a bereaved husband. On questioning the maid he found that she had her suspicions. She had found a vial on the table by the bed, about which she had said nothing. She knew her duty to a noble family, and held her tongue. She gave the vial to Lord Chetwynde, who recognized the presence of strychnine. The unhappy one had no doubt committed suicide. There was a letter addressed to him, which he took away. It was a long manuscript, and contained a full account of all that she had done, together with the most passionate declarations of her love. He thought it best, on the whole, not to show this to Zillah.

He knew that she had committed suicide, but he did not know, nor did any living being, the anguish that must have filled the wretched one as she nerved her heart for the act. All this he could conjecture from her letter, which told him how often she had meditated this. At last it had come. Leaving the villa in her despair, she had gone to her lodgings, passed the night in writing this manuscript, and then flung her guilty soul into the presence of her Maker.

As Lord Chetwynde had not gone into Florentine society at all, Hilda's death created but little sensation. There was no scandal connected with his name; there was no bewildering explanation of things that might have seemed incredible. All was quieted, and even hate itself was buried in the grave of the dead.

The death of Hilda gave a shock to those who had known her, even though they had suffered by her; but there was another thing which gave sadness in the midst of new-found happiness. When Mrs. Hart had left the room, after that eventful evening when she had found Lord Chetwynde and Zillah, she was taken to her bed. From that bed she was destined never to rise again. During the last few months she had suffered more than she could bear. Had she lived in quiet at Chetwynde, life might possibly have been prolonged for a few years. But the illness which she had at Chetwynde had worn her down; and she had scarce risen from her bed, and begun to totter about the house, than she fled on a wild and desperate errand. She had gone, half dying, to Florence, to search after Lord Chetwynde, so as to warn him of what she suspected. Her anxiety for him had given her a fitful and spasmodic strength, which had sustained her. The little jewelry which she possessed furnished the means for prolonging a life which she only cherished till she might find Lord Chetwynde. For weeks she had kept up her search, growing feebler every day, and every day spending more and more of her little store, struggling vehemently against that mortal weakness which she felt in all her frame, and bearing up constantly even amidst despair. At last Obed Chute had found her. She had seen "her boy"—she had found him with Zillah. The danger which she had feared seemed to her to have been averted, she knew not how; and her cup was full.

A mighty revulsion of feeling took place from the depths of despair to the heights of happiness. Her purpose was realized. There was nothing more to live for.

But now, since that purpose was gained, the false strength which had sustained her so long gave way utterly. Her weary frame was at last extended upon a bed from which she would no longer be compelled to rise for the watch and the march and the vigil. Her labor was over. Now came the reaction. Rapidly she yielded. It seemed as though joy had killed her. Not so. A great purpose had given her a fictitious strength; and now, when the purpose was accomplished, the strength departed, and a weakness set in commensurate with the strength—the weakness of approaching dissolution.

She herself knew that all was over. She would not have it otherwise. She was glad that it was so. It was with her now a time to chant a *nunc dimittis*—welcome death! Life had nothing more to offer.

Once again Zillah stood at her bedside, constant and loved and loving. But there was one whose presence inspired a deeper joy, for whom her dying eyes watched—dying eyes wistful in their watch for him. How she had watched during the past months! How those eyes had strained themselves through the throngs of passers-by at Florence, while, day by day, the light of hope grew dimmer! Now they waited for his coming, and his approach never failed to bring to them the kindling light of perfect joy.

Lord Chetwynde himself was true to that fond affection which he had always expressed for her and shown. He showed himself eager to give up all pleasures and all recreations for the sake of being by her bedside.

"MY BOY, HAVE YOU EVER HEARD ABOUT YOUR MOTHER?"

On this Obed Chute used to look with eyes that sometimes glistened with manly tears.

Days passed on, and Mrs. Hart grew weaker. It was possible to count the hours that remained for mortal life. A strange desolation arose in Lord Chetwynde's heart as the prospect of her end lowered before him.

One day Mrs. Hart was alone with him. Obed Chute had called away Zillah for some purpose or other. Before doing so he had whispered

something to the dying woman. As they left she held out her hand to Lord Chetwynde.

"Come here and sit nearer," she wailed forth—"nearer; take my hand, and listen."

Lord Chetwynde did so. He sat in a chair by the bedside, and held her hand. Mrs. Hart lay for a moment looking at him with an earnest and inexplicable gaze.

"Oh!" she moaned, "my boy—my little Guy! can you bear what I am going to say? Bear it! Be merciful! I am dying now. I must tell it before I go. You will be merciful, will you not, my boy?"

"Do not talk so," faltered Lord Chetwynde, in deep emotion.

"Oh, my boy!" said Mrs. Hart, "do you know—have you ever heard any thing about—your—your mother?"

"My mother?"

"Yes."

"No; nothing except that she died when I was an infant."

"Oh, my boy! she did not die, though death would have been a blessing."

A thrill passed through Lord Chetwynde.

"Nurse! nurse!" he cried—"my dear old nurse, what is it that you mean? My mother? She did not die? Is she alive? In the name of God, tell me all!"

"My boy!" said Mrs. Hart, grasping the hand that held hers convulsively—"my boy! can you bear it?"

"Where is my mother?" asked Lord Chetwynde.

Mrs. Hart struggled up. For a moment she leaned on her elbow. In her eyes there gleamed the light of undying love—love deep, yearning, unfathomable—love stronger than life. It was but a faint whisper that escaped her wan, white lips, but that whisper pierced to the soul of the listener, and rang through all his being with echoes that floated down through the years.

And that whisper uttered these words:

"*Oh, my son! I—I—am your mother!*"

A low moan burst from Lord Chetwynde. He caught her dying form in his arms, and a thousand words of love burst from him, as though by that embrace and by those words of love he would drag her back from her immortality. And then, at last, in that embrace and in the hearing of those words of love, there were some few moments of happiness for one who had sinned and suffered so much; and as she lay back her face was overspread with an expression of unutterable peace.

When Zillah returned she saw Lord Chetwynde bowed down, with his arms clasping the form of Mrs. Hart. The smile was still on her face, but it was only the form of that one who had suffered and loved so much which now lay there; for she herself had departed from earth forever, and found a place "where the weary are at rest."

Long afterward Zillah learned more about the past history of that woman whom she had known and loved as Mrs. Hart. It was Obed Chute who told her this, on one of his frequent visits to Chetwynde Castle. He himself had heard it from the former Lady Chetwynde, at the time when she was in New York, and before she joined the Sisters of Charity.

Neville Pomeroy had known her well as a boy, and they had carried on an unmeaning flirtation, which might have developed into something more serious had it not been prevented by her mother, who was on the look-out for something higher. Lord Chetwynde met her ambitious views, and though he was poor, yet his title and brilliant prospects dazzled the ambitious mother. The daughter married him without loving him, in the expectation of a lofty position. When this was lost by Lord Chetwynde's resignation of his position she could not forgive him. She indulged in folly which ended in sin, until she was weak and wicked enough to desert the man whom she had sworn to love. When it was too late she had repented. Neville Pomeroy and Obed Chute had saved her from ruin. The remainder of her life was evident. She had left the Sisters of Charity, from some yearning after her child, and had succeeded in gaining employment in Chetwynde Castle. Such changes had been wrought in her by her sufferings that the Earl never recognized her; and so she had lived, solacing herself with her child.

The knowledge of her history, which was afterward communicated to her son, did not interfere with his filial affection. Her remains now lie in the vaults of Chetwynde Castle beside those of the Earl.

THE END.

"THE ACTUAL STORY OF HER TRUE PARENTAGE OVERWHELMED BEATRICE."—[SEE PAGE 194.]

"THE ACTUAL STORY OF HER TRUE PARENTAGE OVERWHELMED BEATRICE."—[SEE PAGE 194.]

CORD AND CREESE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"THE DODGE CLUB."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1872.

C

H

CORD AND CREESE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"THE DODGE CLUB."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1872.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1869, by

HARPER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

CORD AND CREESE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LETTER FROM BEYOND THE SEA.

On the morning of July 21, 1846, the *Daily News* announced the arrival of the ship *Rival* at Sydney, New South Wales. As ocean steam navigation had not yet extended so far, the advent of this ship with the English mail created the usual excitement. An eager crowd beset the post-office, waiting for the delivery of the mail; and little knots at the street corners were busily discussing the latest hints at news which had been gathered from papers brought ashore by the officers or passengers.

At the lower end of King Street was a large warehouse, with an office at the upper extremity, over which was a new sign, which showed with newly-gilded letters the words:

COMPTON & BRANDON.

The general appearance of the warehouse showed that Messrs. Compton and Brandon were probably commission merchants, general agents, or something of that sort.

On the morning mentioned two men were in the inner office of this warehouse. One was an elderly gentleman, with a kind, benevolent aspect, the senior partner of the firm. The other was the junior partner, and in every respect presented a marked contrast to his companion.

He had a face of rather unusual appearance, and an air which in England is usually considered foreign. His features were regular—a straight nose, wide brow, thin lips, and square, massive chin. His complexion was olive, and his eyes were of a dark hazel color, with a peculiarity about them which is not usually seen in the eye of the Teutonic or Celtic race, but is sometimes found among the people of the south of Europe, or in the East. It is difficult to find a name for this peculiarity. It may be seen sometimes in the gipsy; sometimes in the more successful among those who call themselves "spiritual mediums," or among the more powerful mesmerizers. Such an eye belonged to Napoleon Bonaparte, whose glance at times could make the boldest and greatest among his marshals quail. What is it? Magnetism? Or the revelation of the soul? Or what?

In this man there were other things which gave him the look of the great Napoleon. The contour of feature was the same; and on his brow, broad and massive, there might be seen those grand shadows with which French artists love to glorify the Emperor. Yet in addition to this he had that same serene immobility of countenance which characterized the other, which could serve as an impenetrable mask to hide even the intensest passion.

There was also about this man a certain aristocratic air and grace of attitude, or of manner, which seemed to show lofty birth and gentle breeding, the mysterious index to good blood or high training. How such a man could have happened to fill the position of junior partner in a commission business was certainly a problem not easily solved. There he was, however, a man in appearance out of place, yet in reality able to fill that place with success; a man, in fact, whose resolute will enabled him to enforce success in any calling of life to which either outside circumstances or his own personal desires might invite him.

"The mail ought to be open by this time," said Brandon, indifferently, looking at his watch. "I am somewhat curious to see how things are looking. I noticed quotations of wool rather higher than by last mail. If the papers are correct which I saw then we ought to do very well by that last cargo."

Mr. Compton smiled.

"Well, Brandon," said he, "if it is so it will show that you are right. You anticipated a rise about this time, you know. You certainly have a remarkable forecast about the chances of business."

"I don't think there is much forecast," said Brandon, with a smile, "it was only the most ordinary calculation made from the well-known fact that the exportation this year had been slight. But there comes Hedley now," he continued, moving his head a little to one side so as to look up the street. "The letters will soon show us all."

Mr. Compton looked out in the direction which Brandon indicated and saw the clerk approaching. He then settled himself back in his chair, put his hands in his pockets, threw one leg over the other, and began whistling a tune with the air of a man who was so entirely prosperous and contented that no news whether good or evil could greatly affect his fortunes.

In a short time the clerk entered the inner office, and, laying the letters down upon the table nearest Mr. Compton, he withdrew.

Mr. Compton took up the letters one by one and read the addresses, while Brandon looked carelessly on. There were ten or twelve of them, all of which, except one, were addressed to the firm. This one Mr. Compton selected from among the others, and reaching it out in his hand said:

"This is for you, Mr. Brandon."

"For me?" repeated Brandon, with marked

surprise; and taking the letter he looked at the address with eager curiosity.

The address was simply as follows:

Louis Brandon,

Sydney, New South Wales.

The letters were irregular and loosely formed, as though written by a tremulous hand—such letters as old men form when the muscles have become relaxed.

Mr. Compton went on opening the letters of the firm without taking any further notice of his partner. The latter sat for some time looking at the letter without venturing to open it. He held it in both hands, and looked fixedly at that address as though from the address itself he was trying to extort some meaning.

He held it thus in both hands looking fixedly at it, with his head bent forward. Had Mr. Compton thought of taking a look at his usually impassive companion, he would have been surprised at the change which had taken place in him at the mere sight of that tremulous handwriting. For in that he had read grief, misfortune, perhaps death; and as he sat there, pausing before he dared to break the seal, the contents of the letter had already been conjectured.

Gloom therefore unutterable gathered upon his face; his features fixed themselves into such rigidity of grief that they became more expressive than if they had been distorted by passionate emotions; and over his brow collected cloud upon cloud, which deepened and darkened every instant till they overshadowed all; and his face in its statuesque fixedness resembled nothing so much as that which the artist gives to Napoleon at the crisis hour of Waterloo, when the Guard has recoiled from its last charge, and from that Imperial face in its fixed agony the soul itself seems to cry, "Lost!" "Lost!"

Yet it was only for a few minutes. Hastily subduing his feeling Brandon rose, and clutching the letter in his hand as though it were too precious to be trusted to his pocket, he quietly left the office and the warehouse and walked up the street.

He walked on rapidly until he reached a large building which bore the sign "Australian Hotel." Here he entered, and walked up stairs to a room, and locked himself in. Then when alone in his own apartments he ventured to open the letter.

The paper was poor and mean; the handwriting, like that of the address, was tremulous, and in many places quite illegible; the ink was pale; and the whole appearance of the letter seemed to indicate poverty and weakness on the part of the writer. By a very natural impulse Brandon hesitated before beginning to read, and took in all these things with a quick glance.

At last he nerved himself to the task and began to read.

This was the letter.

"Brandon, *March* 10, 1846.

"My dear Boy,—These are the last words which you will ever hear from your father. I am dying, my dear boy, and dying of a broken heart; but *where* I am dying I am afraid to tell you. That bitterness I leave for you to find out some day for yourself. In poverty unspeakable, in anguish that I pray you may never know, I turn to you after a silence of years, and my first word is to implore your forgiveness. I know my noble boy that you grant it, and it is enough for me to ask it. After asking this I can die content on that score.

"Lying as I do now at the point of death, I find myself at last freed from the follies and prejudices which have been my ruin. The clouds roll away from my mind, and I perceive what a mad fool I have been for years. Most of all I see the madness that instigated me to turn against you, and to put against the loyal love of the best of sons my own miserable pride and the accusation of a lying scoundrel. May God have mercy upon me for this!

"I have not much strength, dear boy; I have to write at intervals, and by stealth, so as not to be discovered, for I am closely watched. *He* must never know that I have sent this to you. Frank and your mother are both sick, and my only help is your sister, my sweet Edith, she watches me, and enables me to write this in safety.

"I must tell you all without reserve before strength leaves me forever.

"That man Potts, whom you so justly hated, was and is the cause of all my suffering and of yours. You used to wonder how such a man as that, a low, vulgar knave, could gain such an influence over me and sway me as he did. I will try to explain.

"Perhaps you remember something about the lamentable death of my old friend Colonel Despard. The first that I ever heard of this man Potts was in his connection with Despard, for whom he acted partly as valet, and partly as business agent. Just before Despard left to go on his fatal voyage he wrote to me about his affairs, and stated, in conclusion, that this man Potts was going to England, that he was sorry to lose him, but recommended him very earnestly to me.

"You recollect that Colonel Despard was murdered on this voyage under very mysterious circumstances on shipboard. His Malay servant Uracao was convicted and executed. Potts distinguished himself by his zeal in avenging his master's death.

"About a year after this Potts himself came to England and visited me. He was, as you know, a rough, vulgar man; but his connection with my murdered friend, and the warm recommendations of that friend, made me receive him with the greatest kindness. Besides, he had many things to tell me about my poor friend, and brought the newspapers both from Manilla and Calcutta which contained accounts of the trial.

"It was this man's desire to settle himself somewhere, and I gave him letters to different people. He then went off, and I did not see him for two years. At the end of that time he returned with glowing accounts of a tin mine which he was working in Cornwall. He had bought it on a low price, and the returns from working it had exceeded his most sanguine expectations. He had just organized a company, and was selling the stock. He came first to me to let me take what I wished. I carelessly took five thousand pounds' worth.

"On the following year the dividend was enormous, being nearly sixty per cent. Potts ex-

"EDITH SHE WATCHES ME, AND ENABLES ME TO WRITE THIS IN SAFETY."

plained to me the cause, declaring that it was the richest mine in the kingdom, and assuring me that my £5000 was worth ten times that sum. His glowing accounts of the mine interested me greatly. Another year the dividend was higher, and he assured me that he expected to pay cent. per cent.

"It was then that the demon of avarice took full possession of me. Visions of millions came to me, and I determined to become the richest man in the kingdom. After this I turned every thing I had into money to invest in the mine. I raised enormous sums on my landed estate, and put all that I was worth, and more too, into the speculation. I was fascinated, not by this man, but by the wealth that he seemed to represent. I believed in him to the utmost. In vain my friends warned me. I turned from them, and quarrelled with most of them. In my madness I refused to listen to the entreaties of my poor wife, and turned even against you. I can not bear to allude to those mournful days when you denounced that villain to his face before me; when I ordered you to beg his pardon or leave my roof forever; when you chose the latter alternative and became an outcast. My noble boy—my true-hearted son, that last look of yours, with all its reproach, is haunting my dying hours. If you were only near me now how peacefully I could die!

"My strength is failing. I can not describe the details of my ruin. Enough that the mine broke down utterly, and I as chief stockholder was responsible for all. I had to sell out every thing. The stock was worthless. The Hall and the estates all went. I had no friend to help me, for by my madness I had alienated them all. All this came upon me during the last year.

"But mark this, my son. This man Potts was *not* ruined. He seemed to have grown possessed of a colossal fortune. When I reproached him with being the author of my calamity, and insisted that he ought to share it with me, the scoundrel laughed in my face.

"The Hall and the estates were sold, unfortunately, though they have been in our family for ages, they were not entailed. A feeling of honor was the cause of this neglect. They were sold, and the purchaser was this man Potts. He must have bought them with the money that he had plundered from me.

"Now, since my eyes have been opened, I have had many thoughts; and among all that occurs to me none is more prominent than the mysterious murder of my friend. This man Potts was with him at the time. He was chief witness against the Malay. The counsel for the defense bore down hard on him, but he managed to escape, and Uracao was executed. Yet this much is evident, that Potts was largely benefited by the death of Despard. He could not have made all his money by his own savings. I believe that the man who wronged me so foully was fully capable of murder. So strong is this conviction now that I sometimes have a superstitious feeling that because I neglected all inquiry into the death of my friend, therefore he has visited me from that other life, and punished me, by making the same man the ruin of us both.

"The mine, I now believe, was a colossal sham; and all the money that I invested in stocks went directly to Potts. Good God! what madness was mine!

"O my boy! Your mother and your brother are lying here sick; your sister attends on us all, though little more than a child. Soon I must leave them; and for those who are destined to live there is a future which I shudder to contemplate. Come home at once. Come home, whatever you are doing. Leave all business, and all prospects, and come and save them. That much you can do. Come, if it is only to take them back with you to that new land where you live, where they may forget their anguish.

"Come home, my son, and take vengeance. This, perhaps, you can not do, but you at least can try. By the time that you read these words they will be my voice from the grave; and thus I invoke you, and call you to take vengeance.

"But at least come and save your mother, your brother, and your sister. The danger is imminent. Not a friend is left. They all hold aloof, indignant at me. This miscreant has his own plans with regard to them, I doubt not; and he will disperse them or send them off to starve in some foreign land. Come and save them.

"But I warn you to be careful about yourself for their sakes. For this villain is powerful now, and hates you worse than any body. His arm may reach even to the antipodes to strike you there. Be on your guard. Watch every one. For once, from words which fell from him hastily, I gathered that he had some dark plan against you. Trust no one. Rely on yourself, and may God help you!

"Poor boy! I have no estate to leave you now, and what I do send to you may seem to you like a mockery. Yet do not despise it. Who knows what may be possible in these days of science? Why may it not be possible to force the sea to give up its prey?

"I send it, at any rate, for I have nothing else to send. You know that it has been in our family for centuries, and have heard how stout old Peter Leggit, with nine sailors, escaped by night through the Spanish fleet, and what suffering they endured before they reached England. He brought this, and it has been preserved ever since. A legend has grown up, as a matter of course, that the treasure will be recovered one day when the family is at its last extremity. It may not be impossible. The writer intended that something should come of it.

"If in that other world to which I am going the disembodied spirit can assist man, then be sure, O my son, I will assist you, and in the crisis of your fate I will be near, if it is only to communicate to your spirit what you ought to do.

"God bless you, dear boy, and farewell.

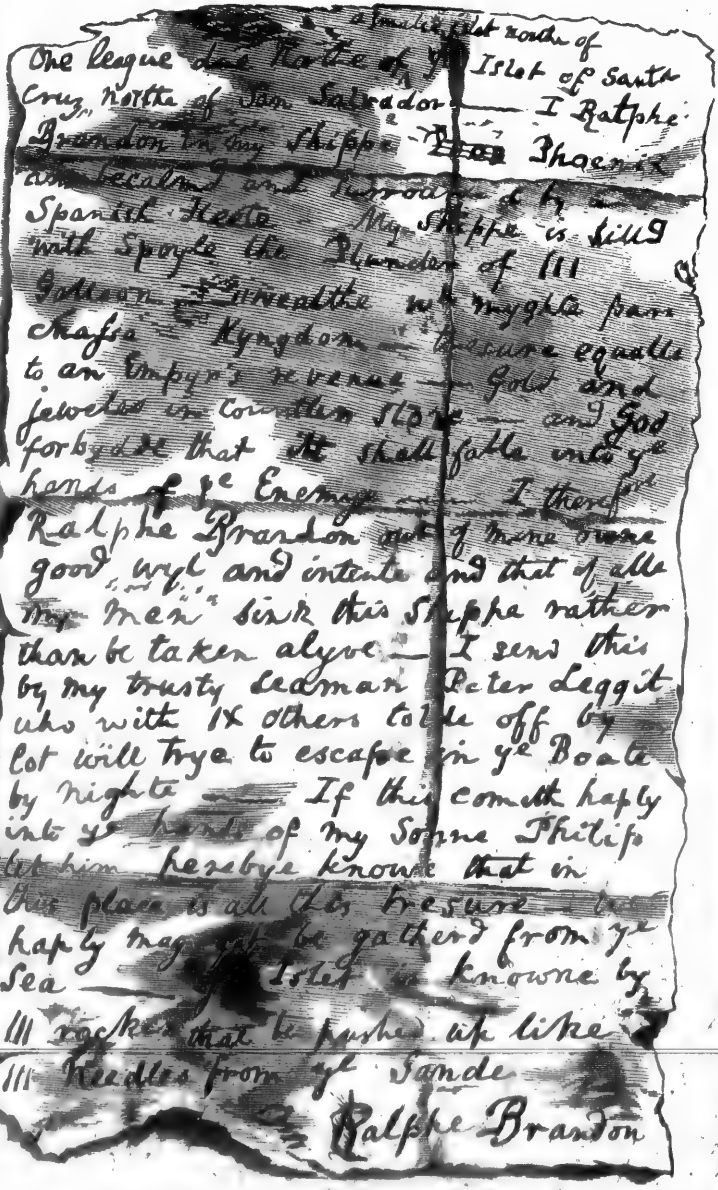
"Your affectionate father,

"RALPH BRANDON."

This letter was evidently written by fragmentary portions, as though it had been done at intervals. Some parts were written leisurely—others apparently in haste. The first half had been written evidently with the greatest ease. The writing of the last half showed weakness and tremulousness of hand; many words would have been quite illegible to one not familiar with the handwriting of the old man. Sometimes the word was written two or three times, and there were numerous blots and unmeaning lines. It grew more and more illegible toward the close. Evidently it was the work of one who was but ill able to exert even sufficient strength to hold a pen in his trembling hand.

In this letter there was folded a large piece of coarse paper, evidently a blank leaf torn from a book, brown with age, which was worn at the folds, and protected there by pieces of cotton which had been pasted upon it. The paper was covered with writing, in ink that was much faded, though still quite legible.

Opening this Brandon read the following:



a smalle flat rocke of
One league and Parte of ye Islet of Santa
Cruz, Northe of San Salvador — I Ralphe
Brandon in my Shippe the Phœnix
am becalmed and surrounded by
Spanish Fleete — My Shippe is stille
with Spoyle the Plunder of III
Golden Cities wch my gode fare
Chaffe — Kyngdom — Treasure equalle
to an Empyre's revenue — Gold and
jewelles in countless store — and God
forbydde that it shall falle into ye
hands of ye Enemye — I therefore
Ralphe Brandon out of mine owne
good wyl and intente and that of alle
my Men sink this Shippe rather
than be taken alyve — I sende this
by my trusty Seaman Peter Leggit
who with IX others to be sette off by
lot will trye to escape in ye Boate
by nighte — If this cometh haply
into ye hands of my Sonne Philipe
let him hereby knowe that in
this place is all his treasure — to
haply may yet be gatherd from ye
Sea — ye Islet is knowne by
III rockes that be pushed up like
III Needles from ye Sande —
Ralphe Brandon

CHAPTER II.

A LIFE TRAGEDY.

Not a word or a gesture escaped Brandon during the perusal, but after he had finished he read the whole through twice, then laying it down, he paced up and down the room. His olive skin had become of a sickly tawny hue, his eyes glowed with intense lustre, and his brow was covered with those gloomy Napoleonic clouds, but not a nerve was shaken by the shock of this dread intelligence.

Evening came and night; and the night passed, and morning came, but it found him still there pacing the room.

Earlier than usual next morning he was at the office, and waited for some time before the senior partner made his appearance. When he came in it was with a smile on his face, and a general air of congratulation to all the world.

"Well, Brandon," said he, cordially, "that last shipment has turned out finely. More than a thousand pounds. And it's all your doing. I objected, but you were right. Let me congratulate you."

Something in Brandon's face seemed to surprise the old gentleman, and he paused for a moment. "Why what's the matter, my boy?" he said, in a paternal voice. "You have not heard any bad news, I hope, in that letter—I hope it's nothing serious?"

Brandon gave a faint smile.

"Serious enough," said he, looking away with an abstracted gaze, "to put a sudden end to my Australian career."

"Oh no—oh no!" said the other, earnestly; "not so bad as that."

"I must go home at once."

"Oh well, that may be, but you will be back again. Take a leave of absence for five years if you wish, but don't quit for good. I'll do the business and won't complain, my boy. I'll keep your place comfortable for you till your return."

Brandon's stern face softened as he looked at the old man, whose features were filled with the kindest expression, and whose tone showed the affectionate interest which he felt.

"Your kindness to me, Mr. Compton," said he, very slowly, and with deep feeling, "has been beyond all words. Ever since I first came to this country you have been the truest and the best of friends. I hope you know me well enough to believe that I can never forget it. But now all this is at an end, and all the bright prospects that I had here must give way to the call of the sternest duty. In that letter which I received last night there came a summons home which I can not neglect, and my whole life hereafter must be directed toward the fulfillment of that summons. From mid-day yesterday until dawn this morning I paced my room incessantly, laying out my plans for the future thus suddenly thrust upon me, and though I have not been able to decide upon any thing definite, yet I see plainly that nothing less than a life will enable me to accomplish my duty. The first thing for me to do is to acquaint you with this and to give up my part in the business."

Mr. Compton placed his elbow on the table near which he had seated himself, leaned his head upon his hand, and looked at the floor. From Brandon's tone he perceived that this resolution was irrevocable. The deep dejection which he felt could not be concealed. He was silent for a long time.

"God knows," said he, at last, "that I would rather have failed in business than that this should have happened."

Brandon looked away and said nothing.

"It comes upon me so suddenly," he continued. "I do not know what to think. And how can I manage these vast affairs without your assistance? For you were the one who did our business. I know that well. I had no head for it."

"You can reduce it to smaller proportions," said Brandon; "that can easily be done."

The old man sighed.

"After all," he continued, "it is not the business. It's losing you that I think of, dear boy. I'm not thinking of the business at all. My grief is altogether about your departure. I grieve, too, at the blow which must have fallen on you to make this necessary."

"The blow is a heavy one," said Brandon; "so heavy that every thing else in life must be forgotten except the one thought—how to recover from it; and perhaps, also," he added, in a lower voice, "how to return it."

Mr. Compton was silent for a long time, and with every minute the deep dejection of his face and manner increased. He folded his arms and shut his eyes in deep thought.

"My boy," said he at last, in that same paternal tone which he had used before, and in a mild, calm voice, "I suppose this thing can not be helped, and all that is left for me to do is to bear it as best I may. I will not indulge in any selfish sorrow in the presence of your greater trouble. I will rather do all in my power to coincide with your wishes. I see now that you must have a good reason for your decision, although I do not seek to look into this reason."

"Believe me," said Brandon, "I would show you the letter at once, but it is so terrible that I would rather that you should not know. It is worse than death, and I do not even yet begin to know the worst."

The old man sighed, and looked at him with deep commiseration.

"If our separation must indeed be final," said he, at last, "I will take care that you shall suffer no loss. You shall have your full share of the capital."

"I leave that entirely to you," said Brandon.

"Fortunately our business is not much scattered. A settlement can easily be made, and I will arrange it so that you shall not have any loss. Our balance-sheet was made out only last month, and it showed our firm to be worth thirty thousand pounds. Half of this is yours, and—"

"Half!" interrupted the other. "My dear friend, you mean a quarter."

The old man waved his hand.

"I said half, and I mean half."

"I will never consent."

"You must."

"Never."

"You shall. Why, think of the petty business that I was doing when you came here. I was worth about four thousand. You have built up the business to its present dimensions. Do you suppose that I don't know?"

"I can not allow you to make such a sacrifice," said Brandon.

"Stop," said Mr. Compton. "I have not said all. I attach a condition to this which I implore you not to refuse. Listen to me, and you will then be able to see."

Mr. Compton rose and looked carefully out into the office. There was no one near. He then returned, locked the door, and drawing his chair close to Brandon, began, in a low voice:

"You have your secrets and I have mine. I don't wish to know yours, but my own I am going to tell to you, not merely for the sake of sympathy, but rather for the sake of your assistance. I am going to tell you who I am, and why I came out here.

"My name is not Compton. It is Henry Lawton. All my early life was passed at York. There I married, had a son, and lived happily for years—in fact, during the childhood of my boy.

"It was that boy of mine, Edgar, that led to all my troubles. I suppose we indulged him too much. It was natural. He was our only child, and so we ruined him. He got beyond our control at last, and used to run wild about the streets of York. I did what I could to save him, but it was too late.

"He went on from bad to worse, until at last he got in with a set of miscreants who were among the worst in the country. My God! to think how my boy, once a sweet child, could have fallen so low. But he was weak, and easily led, and so he went on from bad to worse.

"I can not bear to go into particulars," said the old man, after a long pause. "I will come at once to the point. My poor, wretched boy got in with these miscreants, as I was telling you, and I did not see him from one month's end to another. At last a great burglary took place. Three were arrested. Among these two were old offenders, hardened in vice, the one named Briggs, the other Crocker; the third was my unhappy boy."

The old man was silent for some time.

"I do not think, after all, that he was guilty; but Briggs turned King's Evidence, and Crocker and my son were condemned to transportation. There was no help.

"I sold out all I had in the world, and in compliance with the entreaties of my poor wife, who nearly went mad with grief, I came out here. I changed my name to Compton. My boy's term was for three years. I began a business out here, and as my boy behaved well he was able to get permission to hire out as a servant. I took him nominally as my servant, for no one knew that he was my son, and so we had him with us again.

"I hoped that the bitter lesson which he had learned would prove beneficial, but I did not know the strength of evil inclinations. As long as his term of imprisonment lasted he was content and behaved well; but at last, when the three years were up, he began to grow restive. Crocker was freed at about the same time, and my boy fell again under his evil influence. This lasted for about a year, when, at last, one morning a letter was brought me from him stating that he had gone to India.

"My poor wife was again nearly distracted. She thought of nothing but her boy. She made me take her and go in search of him again. So we went to India. After a long search I found him there, as I had feared, in connection with his old, vicious associates. True, they had changed their names, and were trying to pass for honest men. Crocker called himself Clark, and Briggs called himself Potts."

"Potts!" cried Brandon.

"Yes," said the other, who was too absorbed in his own thoughts to notice the surprise of Brandon. "He was in the employ of Colonel Despard, at Calcutta, and enjoyed much of his confidence."

"What year was this?" asked Brandon.

"1825," replied Mr. Compton. "Crocker," he continued, "was acting as a sort of shipping agent, and my son was his clerk. Of course, my first efforts were directed toward detaching my son from these scoundrels. I did all that I could. I offered to give him half of my property, and finally all, if he would only leave them forever and come back. The wretched boy refused. He did not appear to be altogether bad, but he had a weak nature, and could not get rid of the influence of these men.

"I staid in India a year and a half, until I found at last that there was no hope. I could find nothing to do there, and if I remained I would have to starve or go out to service. This I could not think of doing. So I prepared to come back here. But my wife refused to leave her son. She was resolved, she said, to stay by him till the last. I tried to dissuade her, but could not move her. I told her that I could not be a domestic. She said that she could do even that for the sake of her boy. And she went off at once, and got a situation as nurse with the same Colonel Despard with whom Briggs, or, as he called himself, Potts, was staying."

"What was the Christian name of this Potts?" asked Brandon, calmly.

"John—John Potts."

Brandon said nothing further, and Compton resumed.

"Thus my wife actually left me. I could not stay and be a slave. So I made her promise to write me, and told her that I would send her as much money as I could. She clung to me half broken-hearted as I left her. Our parting was a bitter one—bitter enough; but I would rather break my heart with grief than be a servant. Besides, she knew that whenever she came back my heart was open to receive her.

"I came back to my lonely life out here and lived for nearly two years. At last, in September 1828, a mail arrived from India bringing a letter from my wife, and Indian papers. The news which they brought well-nigh drove me mad."

Compton buried his face in his hands and remained silent for some time.

"You couldn't have been more than a child at that time, but perhaps you may have heard of the mysterious murder of Colonel Despard?"

He looked inquiringly at Brandon, but the latter gave no sign.

"Perhaps not," he continued — "no; you were too young, of course. Well, it was in the *Vishnu*, a brig in which the Colonel had embarked for Manilla. The brig was laden with hogshead staves and box shooks, and the Col-

"THERE'S SOME MYSTERY ABOUT IT WHICH I CAN'T FATHOM."

onel went there partly for his health, partly on business, taking with him his valet Potts."

"What became of his family?" interrupted Brandon.

"He had a son in England at school. His wife had died not long before this at one of the hill stations, where she had gone for her health. Grief may have had something to do with the Colonel's voyage, for he was very much attached to his wife.

"Mails used only to come at long intervals in those days, and this one brought the account not only of the Colonel's fate, but of the trial at Manilla and the execution of the man that was condemned.

"It was a very mysterious case. In the month of July a boat arrived at Manilla which carried the crew and one passenger from the brig *Vishnu*. One of the men, a Malay named Uracao, was in irons, and he was immediately given up to the authorities."

"Who were the others?"

"Potts, as he called himself, the Colonel's valet, Clark, three Lascars, and the Captain, an Italian named Cigole. Information was at once laid against the Malay. Potts was the chief witness. He said that he slept in the cabin while the Colonel slept in an inner state-room; that one morning early he was roused by a frightful shriek and saw Uracao rushing from the Colonel's state-room. He sprang up, chased him, and caught him just as he was about to leap overboard. His creese covered with blood was in his hand. The Colonel, when they went to look at him, had his throat cut from ear to ear. Clark swore that he was steering the vessel and saw Potts catch Uracao, and helped to hold him. The Captain, Cigole, swore that he was waked by the noise, and rushed out in time to see this. Clark had gone as mate of the vessel. Of the Lascars, two had been down below, but one was on deck and swore to have seen the same. On this testimony Uracao was condemned and executed."

"How did they happen to leave the brig?"

"They said that a great storm came up about three days' sail from Manilla, the vessel sprang a leak, and they had to take to the boat. Their testimony was very clear indeed, and there were no contradictions; but in spite of all this it was

felt to be a very mysterious case, and even the exhibition of the Malay creese, carefully covered with the stains of blood, did not altogether dispel this feeling."

"Have you got the papers yet, or are there any in Sydney that contain an account of this affair?"

"I have kept them all. You may read the whole case if you care about it."

"I should like to, very much," said Brandon, with great calmness.

"When I heard of this before the mail was opened I felt an agony of fear lest my miserable boy might be implicated in some way. To my immense relief his name did not occur at all."

"You got a letter from your wife?" said Brandon, interrogatively.

"Yes," said the old man, with a sigh. "The last that I ever received from her. Here it is." And, saying this, he opened his pocket-book and took out a letter, worn and faded, and blackened by frequent readings.

Brandon took it respectfully, and read the following:

"CALCUTTA, *August* 15, 1828.

"MY DEAREST HENRY,—By the papers that I send you, you will see what has occurred. Our dear Edgar is well, indeed better than usual, and I would feel much cheered if it were not for the sad fate of the poor Colonel. This is the last letter that you will ever receive from me. I am going to leave this country never to return, and do not yet know where I will go. Wherever I go I will be with my darling Edgar. Do not worry about me or about him. It will be better for you to try and forget all about us, since we are from this time the same as dead to you. Good-by forever, my dearest husband; it shall be my daily prayer that God may bless you.

"Your affectionate wife, MARY."

Brandon read this in silence, and handed it back.

"A strange letter," said Compton, mournfully. "At first it gave a bitter pang to think of my Mary thus giving me up forever, so coldly, and for no reason: but afterward I began to understand why she wrote this.

"My belief is, that these villains kept my son in their clutches for some good reason, and that they had some equally good reason for keeping her. There's some mystery about it which I can't fathom. Perhaps she knew too much about the Colonel's affairs to be allowed to go free. They might have detained her by working upon her love for her son, or simply by terrifying her. She was always a timid soul, poor Mary. That letter is not her composition; there is not a word there that sounds like her, and they no doubt told her what to write, or wrote out something, and made her copy it.

"And now," said Compton, after another long pause, "I have got to the end of my story. I know nothing more about them. I have lived here ever since, at first despairing, but of late more resigned to my lot. Yet still if I have one desire in life it is to get some trace of these dear ones whom I still love as tenderly as ever. You, my dear boy, with your ability may conjecture some way. Besides, you will perhaps be traveling more or less, and may be able to hear of their fate. This is the condition that I make. I implore you by your pity for a heart-broken father to do as I say and help me. Half! why, I would give all that I have if I could get them back again."

Brandon shuddered perceptibly at the words "heart-broken father;" but he quickly recovered himself. He took Compton's hand and pressed it warmly.

"Dear friend, I will make no objection to any thing, and I promise you that all my best efforts shall be directed toward finding them out."

"Tell them to come to me, that I am rich, and can make them happy."

"I'll make them go to you if they are alive," said Brandon.

"God bless you!" ejaculated the old man, fervently.

Brandon spent the greater part of that day in making business arrangements, and in reading the papers which Compton had preserved containing an account of the Despard murder.

It was late at night before he returned to his hotel. As he went into the hall he saw a stranger sitting there in a lounging attitude reading the Sydney *News*.

He was a thin, small-sized man, with a foreign air, and quick, restless manner. His features were small, a heavy beard and mustache covered his face, his brow was low, and his eyes black and twinkling. A sharp, furtive glance which he gave at Brandon attracted the attention of the latter, for there was something in the glance that meant more than idle curiosity.

Even in the midst of his cares Brandon's curiosity was excited. He walked with assumed indifference up to the desk as though looking for the key of his room. Glancing at the hotel book his eye ranged down the column of names till it rested on the last one,

"*Pietro Cigole.*"

—Cigole! the name brought singular associations. Had this man still any connection with Potts? The words of his father's letter rushed into his mind—"His arm may reach even to the antipodes to strike you. Be on your guard. Watch every one. He has some dark plan against you!"

With these thoughts in his mind Brandon went up to his room.

CHAPTER III.

"A MAN OVERBOARD!"

IN so small a town as Sydney then was Brandon could hope to learn all that could be learned about Cigole. By casual inquiries he learned that the Italian had come out in the *Rival*, and had given out that he was agent for a London house in the wool business. He had bought up a considerable quantity which he was preparing to ship.

Brandon could not help feeling that there was some ruse about this. Yet he thought, on the other hand, why should he flaunt his name so boldly before the world? If he is in reality following me why should he not drop his name? But then, again, why should he? Perhaps he thinks that I can not possibly know any thing about his name. Why should I? I was a child when Despard was murdered. It may be merely a similarity of names.

Brandon from time to time had opportunities of hearing more about Cigole, yet always the man seemed absorbed in business.

He wondered to himself whether he had better confide his suspicions to Mr. Compton or not. Yet why should he? The old man would become excited, and feel all sorts of wild hopes about discovering his wife and son. Could it be possible that the Italian after so many years could now afford any clew whatever? Certainly it was not very probable.

On the whole Brandon thought that this man, whoever he was or whatever his purpose might be, would be encountered best by himself singly. If Mr. Compton took part he would at once awaken Cigole's fears by his clumsiness.

Brandon felt quite certain that Mr. Compton would not know any thing about Cigole's presence in Sydney unless he himself told him. For the old man was so filled with trouble at the loss of his partner that he could think of nothing else, and all his thoughts were taken up with closing up the concern so as to send forward remittances of money to London as soon as possible. Mr. Compton had arranged for him to draw £2000 on his arrival at London, and three months afterward £3000—£10,000 would be remitted during the following year.

Brandon had come to the conclusion to tell Mr. Compton about Cigole before he left, so that if the man remained in the country he might be bribed or otherwise induced to tell what he knew; yet thinking it possible that Cigole had designed to return in the same ship with him, he waited to see how things would turn out. As he could not help associating Cigole in his mind with Potts, so he thought that whichever way he turned this man would try to follow him. His anticipations proved correct. He had taken passage in the ship *Java*, and two days before the vessel left he learned that Cigole had taken his passage in her also, having put on board a considerable quantity of wool. On the whole Brandon felt gratified to hear this, for the close association of a long sea voyage would give him opportunities to test this man, and probe him to the bottom. The thought of danger arising to himself did not enter his mind. He believed that Cigole meant mischief, but had too much confidence in his own powers to fear it.

On the 5th of August the ship *Java* was ready, and Mr. Compton stood on the quarter-deck to bid good-by to Brandon.

"God bless you, dear boy! You will find the money coming promptly, and Smithers & Co.'s house is one of the strongest in London. I have brought you a parting gift," said he, in a low voice. He drew from his pocket a pistol, which in those days was less known than now—indeed, this was the first of its kind which had reached Australia, and Mr. Compton had paid a fabulous price for it. "Here," said he, "take this to remember me by. They call it a revolver. Here is a box of patent cartridges that go with it. It is from me to you. And mind," he continued, while there came over his face a vengeful look which Brandon had never seen there before—"mind, if ever you see John Potts, give him one of those patent cartridges, and tell him it is the last gift of a broken-hearted father."

Brandon's face turned ghastly, and his lips seemed to freeze into a smile of deadly meaning.

"God bless you!" cried Compton, "I see by your face that you will do it. Good-by."

He wrung Brandon's hand hard and left the ship.

About six feet away stood Cigole, looking over the stern and smoking a cigar. He was near enough to hear what had been said, but he did not appear to have heard it. Throwing his cigar into the water, he plunged his hands into his pockets, and began whistling a lively air.

"Aha, Capitano," said he, in a foreign accent, "I have brought my wool off at last."

Brandon paced the deck silently yet watchfully.

The good ship *Java* went out with a fine breeze, which continued for some days, until at last nothing could be seen but the wide ocean. In those few days Brandon had settled himself comfortably on board, and had learned pretty well the kind of life which he would have to lead for the next six months or so. The captain was a quiet, amiable sort of a person, without much force of character; the mate was more energetic and somewhat passionate; the crew consisted of the average order of men. There was no chance, certainly, for one of those conspiracies such as Mr. Compton had hinted at as having taken place on the *Vishnu*; for in his account of that affair he evidently believed that Uracao had been made a scape-goat for the sins of the others.

Brandon was soon on the best of terms with the officers of the ship. As to Cigole it was different. The fact of their being the only passengers on board might of itself have been a sufficient cause to draw them together; but Brandon found it difficult to pass beyond the extremest limits of formal intercourse. Brandon himself considered that his purposes would be best served by close association with this man; he hoped that in the course of such association he might draw something from Cigole. But Cigole baffled him constantly. He was as polite and courteous as all Italians are; he had an abundance of remarks all ready about the state of the weather, the prospects of the voyage, or the health of the seamen; but beyond these topics it was difficult to induce him to go. Brandon stifled the resentment which he felt toward this man, in his efforts to break down the barriers of formality which he kept up, and sought to draw him out on the subject of the wool trade. Yet here he was baffled. Cigole always took up the air of a man who was speaking to a rival in business, and pretended to be very cautious and guarded in his remarks about wool, as though he feared that Brandon would interfere with his prospects. This sort of thing was kept up with such great delicacy of management on Cigole's part that Brandon himself would have been completely deceived, and would have come to consider him as nothing more than a speculator in wool, had it not been for a certain deep instinct within him, which made him regard this man as one who was actuated by something far deeper than mere regards for a successful speculation.

Cigole managed to baffle the most dextrous efforts and the most delicate contrivances of Brandon. He would acknowledge that he was an Italian, and had been in all parts of Italy, but carefully refrained from telling where he was born. He asserted that this was the first time that he had been in the Eastern seas. He re-

marked once, casually, that Cigole was a very common name among Italians. He said that he had no acquaintances at all in England, and was only going there now because he heard that there was a good market for wool. At another time he spoke as though much of his life had been passed in Marseilles, and hinted that he was a partner of a commercial house there.

Cigole never made any advances, and never even met half-way those which Brandon made. He was never off his guard for one instant. Polite, smiling, fugitive, never looking Brandon fairly in the face, he usually spoke with a profusion of bows, gestures, and commonplaces, adopting, in fact, that part which is always at once both the easiest and the safest to play—the non-committal, pure and perfect.

It was cunning, but low cunning after all, and Brandon perceived that, for one who had some purpose to accomplish with but a common soul to sustain him, this was the most ordinary way to do it. A villain of profounder cunning or of larger spirit would have pursued a different path. He would have conversed freely and with apparent unreserve; he would have yielded to all friendly advances, and made them himself; he would have shown the highest art by concealing art, in accordance with the hackneyed proverb, "Ars est celare artem."

Brandon despised him as an ordinary villain, and hardly thought it worth his while to take any particular notice of him, except to watch him in a general way. But Cigole, on the contrary, was very different. His eyes, which never met those of Brandon fairly, were constantly watching him. When moving about the quarter-deck or when sitting in the cabin he usually had the air of a man who was pretending to be intent on something else, but in reality watching Brandon's acts or listening to his words. To any other man the knowledge of this would have been in the highest degree irksome. But to Brandon it was gratifying, since it confirmed his suspicions. He saw this man, whose constant efforts were directed toward not committing himself by word, doing that very thing by his attitude, his gesture, and the furtive glance of his eye. Brandon, too, had his part, but it was infinitely greater than that of Cigole, and the purpose that now animated his life was unintelligible to this man who watched him. But Cigole's whole soul was apparent to Brandon; and by his small arts, his low cunning, his sly observation, and many other peculiarities, he exhibited that which is seen in its perfection in the ordinary spy of despotic countries, such as used to abound most in Rome and Naples in the good old days.

For the common spy of Europe may deceive the English or American traveler; but the Frenchman, the German, the Spaniard, or the Italian, always recognizes him.

So Brandon's superior penetration discovered the true character of Cigole.

He believed that this man was the same Cigole who had figured in the affair of the *Vishnu*; that he had been sent out by Potts to do some injury to himself, and that he was capable of any crime. Yet he could not see how he could do any thing. He certainly could not incite the simple-minded captain and the honest mate to conspiracy. He was too great a coward to attempt any violence. So Brandon concluded that he had simply come to watch him so as to learn his character, and carry back to Potts all the knowledge that he might gain.

This was his conclusion after a close association of one month with Cigole. Yet he made up his mind not to lose sight of this man. To him he appeared only an agent in villainy, and therefore unworthy of vengeance; yet he might be made use of as an aid in that vengeance. He therefore wished to have a clew by which he might afterward find him.

"You and I," said he one day, in conversation, "are both in the same trade. If I ever get to England I may wish some time to see you. Where can I find you?"

Cigole looked in twenty different directions, and hesitated for some time.

"Well," said he at last, "I do not think that you will wish to see me—" and he hesitated; "but," he resumed, with an evil smile, "if you should by any possibility wish to do so, you can find out where I am by inquiring of Giovanni Cavallo, 16 Red Lion Street, London."

"Perhaps I may not wish to," said Brandon, coolly, "and perhaps I may. At any rate, if I do, I will remember to inquire of Giovanni Cavallo, 16 Red Lion Street, London."

He spoke with deep emphasis on the address. Cigole looked uncomfortable, as though he had at last made the mistake which he dreaded, and had committed himself.

So the time passed.

After the first few days the weather had become quite stormy. Strong head-winds, accompanied often by very heavy rains, had to be encountered. In spite of this the ship had a very good passage northward, and met with no particular obstacle until her course was turned toward the Indian Ocean. Then all the winds were dead against her, and for weeks a succession of long tacks far to the north and to the south brought her but a short distance onward. Every day made the wind more violent and the storm worse. And now the season of the equinox was approaching, when the monsoons change, and all the winds that sweep over these seas alter their courses. For weeks before and after this season the winds are all unsettled, and it seems as if the elements were let loose. From the first week in September this became manifest, and every day brought them face to face with sterner difficulties. Twice before the captain had been to Australia; and for years he had been in the China trade; so that he knew these seas well; but he said that he had never known the equinoctial storms begin so early, and rage with such violence.

Opposed by such difficulties as these the ship made but a slow passage—the best routes had not yet been discovered—and it was the middle of September before they entered the Indian Ocean. The weather then became suddenly calm, and they drifted along beyond the latitude of the western extremity of Java, about a hundred miles south of the Straits of Sunda. Here they began to encounter the China fleet which steers through this strait, for every day one or more sails were visible.

Here they were borne on helplessly by the ocean current, which at this place are numerous and distracting. The streams that flow through

the many isles of the Indian Archipelago, uniting with the greater southern streams, here meet and blend, causing great difficulties to navigation, and often baffling even the most experienced seaman. Yet it was not all left to the currents, for frequently and suddenly the storms came up; and the weather, ever changeful, kept the sailors constantly on the alert.

Yet between the storms the calms were frequent, and sometimes long continued, though of such a sort as required watchfulness. For out of the midst of dead calms the storm would suddenly rise in its might, and all the care which experience could suggest was not always able to avert disaster.

"I don't like this weather, Mr. Brandon. It's the worst that we could have, especially just here."

"Why just here?"

"Why, we're opposite the Straits of Sunda, the worst place about these parts."

"What for?"

"Pirates. The Malays, you know. We're not over well prepared to meet them, I'm afraid. If they come we'll have to fight them the best we can; and these calms are the worst thing for us, because the Malay proas can get along with the lightest wind, or with oars, when we can't get at all."

"Are the Malays any worse than usual now?" asked Brandon.

"Well, no worse than they've been for the last ten years. Zangorri is the worst of them all."

"Zangorri! I've heard of him."

"I should think you had. Why, there never was a pirate in these seas that did so much damage. No mortal knows the ships that devil has captured and burned."

"I hope you have arms for the seamen, at any rate."

"Oh, we have one howitzer, and small-arms for the men, and we will have to get along the best way we can with these; but the owners ought never to send us here without a better equipment."

"I suppose they think it would cost too much."

"Yes; that's it. They think only about the profits, and trust to luck for our safety. Well, I only hope we'll get safely out of this place—that's all."

And the captain walked off much more excited than usual.

They drifted on through days of calm, which were succeeded by fierce but short-lived storms, and then followed by calms. Their course lay sometimes north, sometimes south, sometimes nowhere. Thus the time passed, until at length, about the middle of September, they came in sight of a long, low island of sand.

"I've heard of that sand-bank before," said the captain, who showed some surprise at seeing it; "but I didn't believe it was here. It's not down in the charts. Here we are three hundred and fifty miles southwest of the Straits of Sunda, and the chart makes this place all open water. Well, seein's believin'; and after this I'll swear that there is such a thing as Coffin Island."

"Is that the name?"

"That's the name an old sea-captain gave it, and tried to get the Admiralty to put it on the charts, but they wouldn't. But this is it, and no mistake."

"Why did he call it Coffin Island?"

"Well, he thought that rock looked like a coffin, and it's dangerous enough when a fog comes to deserve that name."

Brandon looked earnestly at the island which the captain mentioned, and which they were slowly approaching.

It lay toward the north, while the ship's course, if it had any in that calm, was southwest. It was not more than six miles away, and appeared to be about five miles long. At the nearest extremity a black rock arose to a height of about fifty feet, which appeared to be about five hundred feet long, and was of such a shape that the imagination might easily see a resemblance to a coffin. At the farthest extremity of the island was a low mound. The rest of the island was flat, low, and sandy, with no trace of vegetation perceptible from the ship, except a line of dingy green under the rock, which looked like grass.

The ship drifted slowly on.

Meanwhile the captain, in anticipation of a storm, had caused all the sails to be taken in, and stood anxiously watching the sky toward the southwest.

There a dense mass of clouds lay piled along the horizon, gloomy, lowering, menacing; frowning over the calm seas as though they would soon destroy that calm, and fling forth all the fury of the winds. These clouds seemed to have started up from the sea, so sudden had been their appearance; and now, as they gathered themselves together, their forms distended, and heightened, and reached forward vast arms into the sky, striving to climb there, rolling upward voluminous cloud masses which swiftly ascended toward the zenith. So quick was the progress of these clouds that they did not seem to come from the banks below; but it was rather as though all the air suddenly condensed its moisture and made it visible in these dark masses.

As yet there was no wind, and the water was as smooth as glass; but over the wide surface, as far as the eye could reach, the long swell of the ocean had changed into vast rolling undulations, to the motion of which the ship yielded, slowly ascending and descending as the waters rose and fell, while the yards creaked, and the rigging twanged to the strain upon them.

Every moment the sky grew darker, and as gloom gathered above so it increased below, till all the sea spread out a smooth ebon mass. Darkness settled down, and the sun's face was thus obscured, and a preternatural gloom gathered upon the face of nature. Overhead vast black clouds went sweeping past, covering all things, faster and faster, till at last far down in the northern sky the heavens were all obscured.

But amidst all this there was as yet not a breath of wind. Far above the wind careered in a narrow current, which did not touch the surface of the sea but only bore onward the clouds. The agitation of the sky above contrasted with the stillness below made the latter not consoling but rather fearful, for this could be none other than that treacherous stillness which precedes the sudden outburst of the hurricane.

For that sudden outburst all were now looking, expecting it every moment. On the side of the ship where the wind was expected the captain was standing, looking anxiously at the black clouds on the horizon, and all the crew

"HE PUSHE

were gazing there
that quarter
for this assault tha
made.

For some time
lecting clouds, bu
and seemed to find
sand-bank. He s
looking fixedly tow
ed, and his thoug
thing. A low rai
deck. The helmsm
which rose only tw
captain stood by
south at the storm
stan, and all were
expectation of a su

Close by the ru
ing with all the rest
face was only half
ed this with only
his stealthy eyes t
he alone of all on
sorbed by some ove

Suddenly a faint,
the southward; it
flash over the water

"HE PUSHED HIM HEADLONG OVER THE RAIL AND HELPLESSLY INTO THE SEA."

were gazing there in sympathy with him. From that quarter the wind would burst, and it was for this assault that all the preparations had been made.

For some time Brandon had watched the collecting clouds, but at length he turned away, and seemed to find a supreme fascination in the sand-bank. He stood at the stern of the ship, looking fixedly toward the rock, his arms folded, and his thoughts all absorbed in that one thing. A low railing ran round the quarter-deck. The helmsman stood in a sheltered place which rose only two feet above the deck. The captain stood by the companion-way, looking south at the storm; the mate was near the capstan, and all were intent and absorbed in their expectation of a sudden squall.

Close by the rudder-post stood Cigole, looking with all the rest at the gathering storm. His face was only half turned, and as usual he watched this with only a furtive glance, for at times his stealthy eyes turned toward Brandon; and he alone of all on board did not seem to be absorbed by some overmastering thought.

Suddenly a faint, fluttering ripple appeared to the southward; it came quickly; it seemed to flash over the waters; with the speed of the wind it moved on, till a quick, fresh blast struck the ship and sighed through the rigging. Then a faint breathing of wind succeeded; but far away there rose a low moan like that which arises from some vast cataract at a great distance, whose roar, subdued by distance, sounds faintly, yet warningly, to the ear.

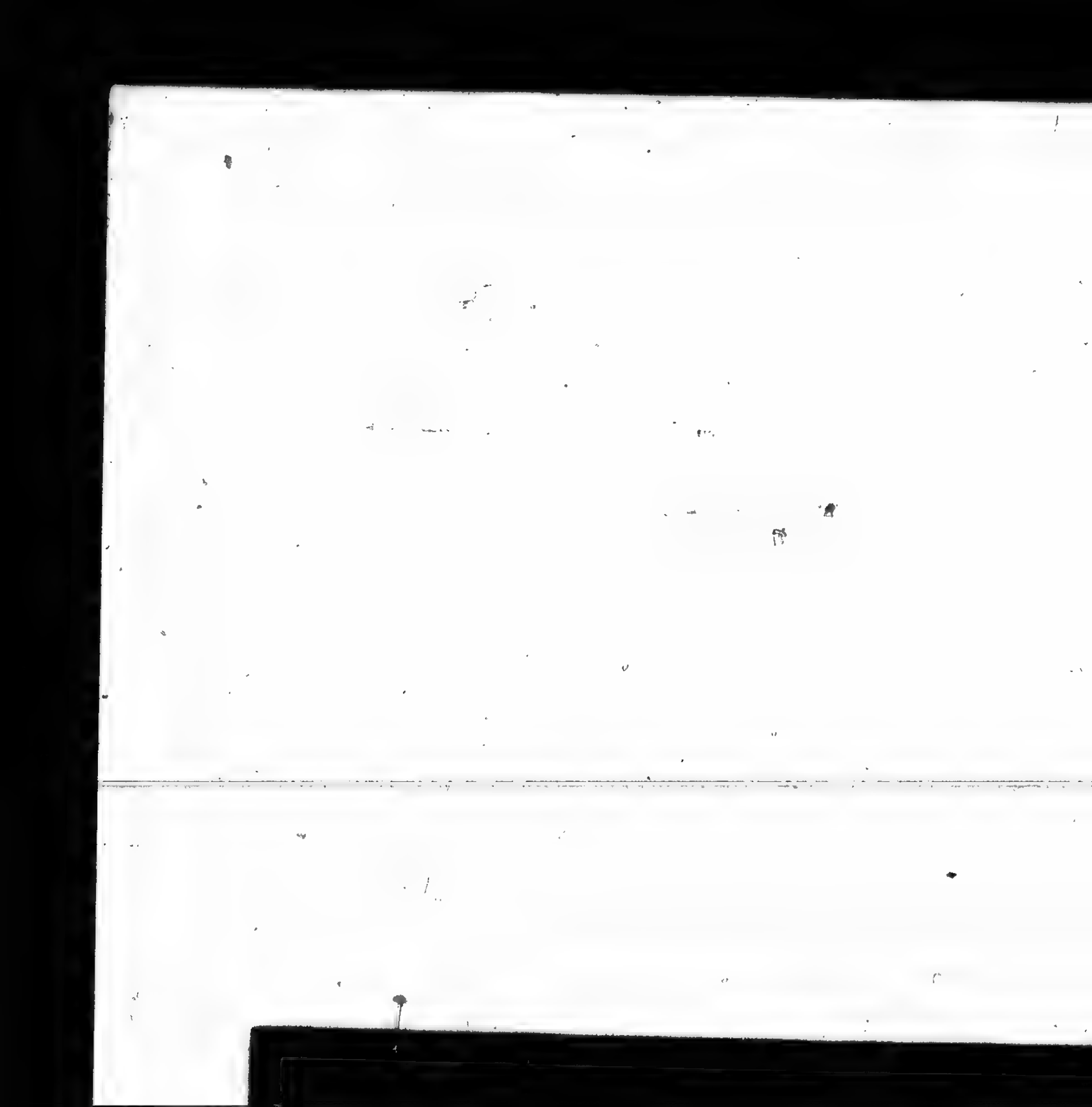
At this first touch of the tempest, and the menacing voice of its approach, not a word was spoken, but all stood mute. Brandon alone appeared not to have noticed it. He still stood with folded arms and absorbed air, gazing at the island.

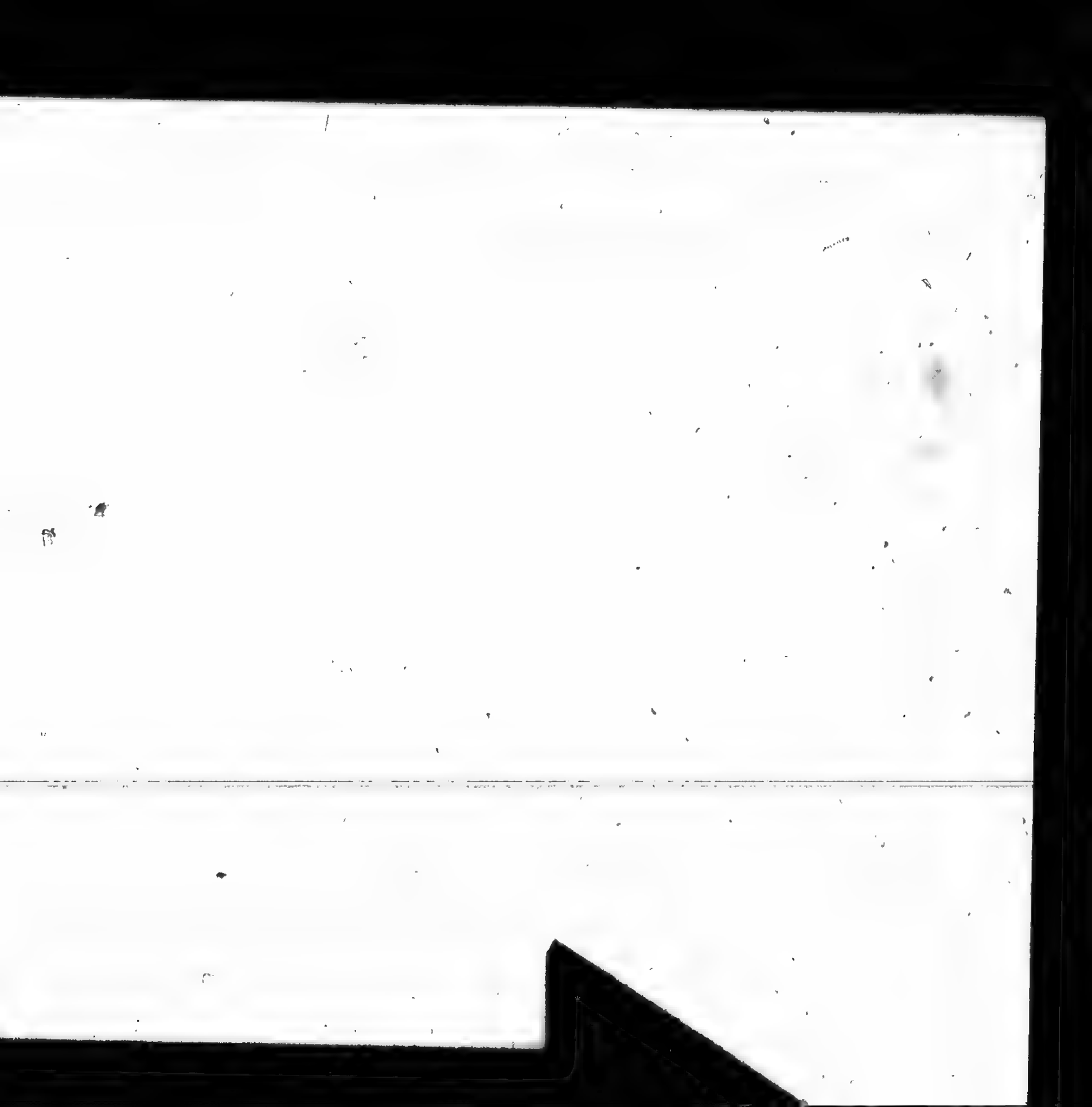
The roar of the waters in the distance grew louder, and in the direction from which it came the dark water was all white with foam, and the boiling flood advanced nearer in myriad-numbered waves, which seemed now like an army rushing to the charge, tossing on high its crested heads and its countless foam-plumes, and threatening to bear down all before it.

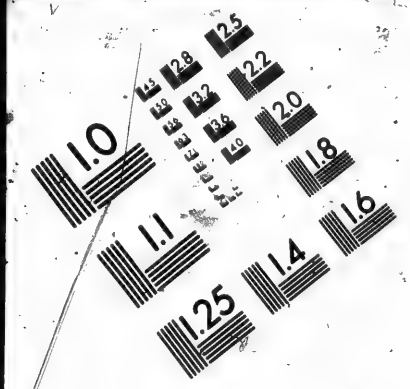
At last the tornado struck.

At the fierce blast of the storm the ship rolled far over, the masts creaked and groaned, the waves rushed up and dashed against the side.

At that instant Cigole darted quickly toward Brandon, and the moment that the vessel yield-







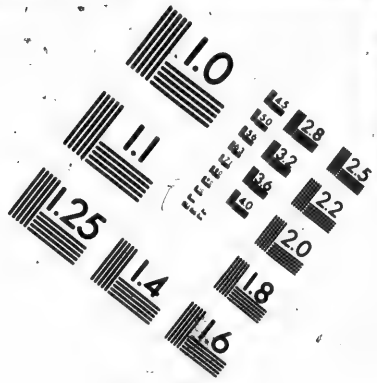
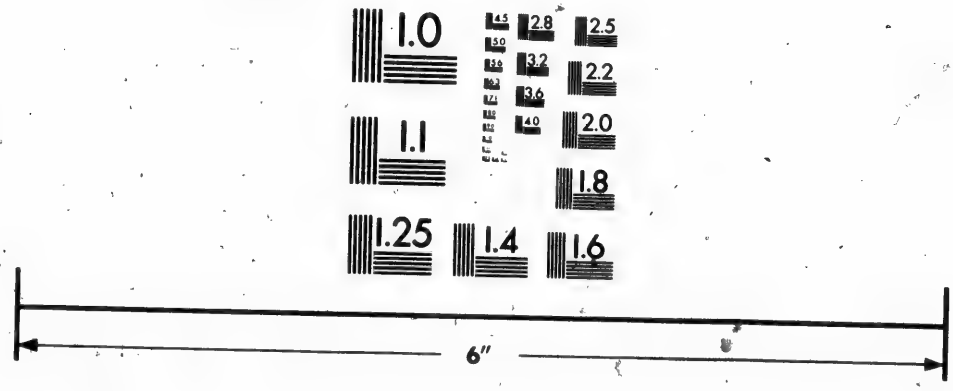
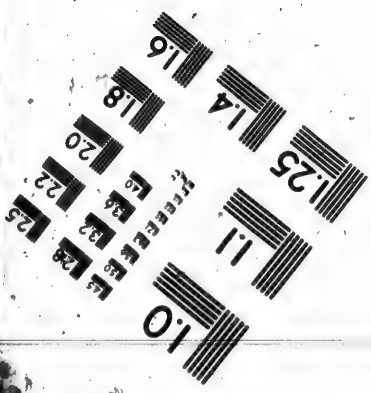


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)





Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

ed to the blow of the storm he fell violently against him. Before Brandon had noticed the storm or had time to steady himself he had pushed him headlong over the rail and helplessly into the sea—

"——liquidas projecit in undas
Præcipitem."

Cigole clung to the rail, and instantly shrieked out:

"Man overboard!"

The startling cry rang through the ship. The captain turned round with a face of agony.

"Man overboard!" shouted Cigole again. "Help! It's Brandon!"

"Brandon!" cried the captain. "He's lost! O God!"

He took up a hen-coop from its fastenings and flung it into the sea, and a couple of pails after it.

He then looked aloft and to the south with eyes of despair. He could do nothing. For now the storm was upon them, and the ship was plunging furiously through the waters with the speed of a race-horse at the touch of the gale. On the lee-side lay the sand-bank, now only three miles away, whose unknown shallows made their present position perilous in the extreme. The ship could not turn to try and save the lost passenger; it was only by keeping straight on that there was any hope of avoiding that lee-shore.

All on board shared the captain's despair, for all saw that nothing could be done. The ship was at the mercy of the hurricane. To turn was impossible. If they could save their own lives now it would be as much as they could do.

Away went the ship—away, farther and farther, every moment leaving at a greater distance the lost man who struggled in the waters.

At last they had passed the danger, the island was left behind, and the wide sea lay all around.

But by this time the storm was at its height; the ship could not maintain its proper course, but, yielding to the gale, fled to the northwest far out of its right direction.

CHAPTER IV.

SINKING IN DEEP WATERS.

BRANDON, overwhelmed by the rush of waters, half suffocated, and struggling in the rush of the waves, shrieked out a few despairing cries for help, and sought to keep his head above water as best he could. But his cries were borne off by the fierce winds, and the ship as it careered madly before the blast was soon out of hearing.

He was a first-rate swimmer, but in a sea like this it needed all his strength and all his skill to save himself from impending death. Encumbered by his clothes it was still more difficult, yet so fierce was the rush of wind and wave that he dared not stop for a moment in his struggles in order to divest himself of his clothing.

At first, by a mere blind instinct, he tried to swim after the ship, as though by any possibility he could ever reach her again, but the hurricane was against him, and he was forced sideways far out of the course which he was trying to take. At last the full possession of his senses was restored, and following the ship no longer, he turned toward the direction where that sand island lay which had been the cause of his disaster. At first it was hidden from view by the swell of waves that rose in front, but soon rising upon the crest of one of these he perceived far away the dark form of the coffin-shaped rock. Here then before him lay the island, and toward this both wind and wave impelled him.

But the rock was far to the right, and it might be that the island did not extend far enough to meet him as he neared it. It was about five miles in length, but in his efforts he might not be able to reach even the western extremity. Still there was nothing else to do but to try. Resolutely, therefore, though half despairingly, he put forth his best strength, and struggled manfully to win the shore.

That lone and barren sand-bank, after all, offered but a feeble chance for life. Even if he did reach it, which was doubtful, what could he do? Starvation instead of drowning would be his fate. More than once it occurred to him that it would be better then and there to give up all efforts and let himself go. But then there came the thought of those dear ones who waited for him in England, the thought of the villain who had thrown him from the ship, and the greater villain who had sent him out on his murderous errand. He could not bear the idea that they should triumph over him so easily and so quickly. His vengeance should not be taken from him; it had been baffled, but it still nerved his arm.

A half hour's struggle, which seemed like many hours, had brought him much nearer to the island, but his strength was almost exhausted. His clothes, caught in the rush of the waves, and clinging to him, confined the free action of his limbs, and lent an additional weight. Another half hour's exertion might possibly bring him to the shore, but that exertion hardly seemed possible. It was but with difficulty now that he could strike out. Often the rush of the waves from behind would overwhelm him, and it was only by convulsive efforts that he was able to surmount the raging billows and regain his breath.

Efforts like these, however, were too exhaustive to be long continued. Nature failed, and already a wild despair came over him. For a quarter of an hour longer he had continued his exertions; and now the island was so near that a quarter of an hour more might bring him to it. But even that exertion of strength was now no longer possible. Faintly and feebly, and with failing limbs and fiercely-throbbing heart, he toiled on, until at last any further effort seemed impossible. Before him was the mound which he had noticed from the ship. He was at the western extremity of the island. He saw that he was being carried in such a direction that even if he did struggle on he might be borne helplessly past the island and out into the open sea. Already he could look past the island, and see the wide expanse of white foaming waves which threatened to engulf him. The sight weakened what little strength was left, and made his efforts even feebler.

Despairingly he looked around, not knowing what he sought, but seeking still for something, he knew not what. In that last look of despair his eyes caught sight of something which at once gave him renewed hope. It was not far away.

Borne along by the waves it was but a few yards distant, and a little behind him. It was the hen-coop which the Captain of the *Java* had thrown overboard so as to give Brandon a chance for life. That last chance was now thrown in his way, for the hen-coop had followed the same course with himself, and had been swept along not very far from him.

Brandon was nerved to new efforts by the sight of this. He turned and exerted the last remnants of his strength in order to reach this means of safety. It was near enough to be accessible. A few vigorous strokes, a few struggles with the waves, and his hands clutched the bars with the grasp of a drowning man.

It was a large hen-coop, capable of keeping several men afloat. Brandon clung to this and at last had rest. Every minute of respite from such struggles as he had carried on restored his strength to a greater degree. He could now keep his head high out of the water and avoid the engulfing fury of the waves behind. Now at last he could take a better survey of the prospect before him, and see more plainly whither he was going.

The sand-bank lay before him; the mound at the western extremity was in front of him, not very far away. The rock which lay at the eastern end was now at a great distance, for he had been swept by the current abreast of the island, and was even now in danger of being carried past it. Still there was hope, for wind and wave were blowing directly toward the island, and there was a chance of his being carried full upon its shore. Yet the chance was a slender one, for the set of the tide rather carried him beyond the line of the western extremity.

Every minute brought him nearer, and soon his fate would be decided. Nearer and nearer he came, still clinging to the hen-coop, and making no efforts whatever, but reserving and collecting together all his strength, so as to put it forth at the final hour of need.

But as he came nearer the island appeared to move more and more out of the line of his approach. Under these circumstances his only chance was to float as near as possible, and then make a last effort to reach the land.

Nearer and nearer he came. At last he was close by it, but the extreme point of the island lay to the right more than twenty yards. This was the crisis of his fate, for now if he floated on any longer he would be carried farther away.

The shore was here low but steep, the waters appeared to be deep, and a heavy surf dashed upon the island, and threw up its spray far over the mound. He was so near that he could distinguish the pebbles on the beach, and could see beyond the mound a long, flat surface with thin grass growing.

Beyond this point was another a hundred yards away, but farther out of his reach, and affording no hope whatever. Between the two points there was an inlet into the island showing a little cove; but the surf just here became wilder, and long rollers careered one past another over the intervening space. It was a hopeless prospect. Yet it was his last chance.

Brandon made up his mind. He let go the hen-coop, and summoning up all his strength he struck out for the shore. But this time the wind and sea were against him, bearing him past the point, and the waves dashed over him more quickly and furiously than before. He was swept past the point before he had made half a dozen strokes; he was borne on still struggling; and now on his left lay the rollers which he had seen. In spite of all his efforts he was farther away from the island than when he had left the hen-coop. Yet all hope and all life depended upon the issue of this last effort. The fifteen or twenty minutes of rest and of breathing-space which he had gained had been of immense advantage, and he struggled with all the force which could be inspired by the nearness of safety. Yet, after all, human efforts can not withstand the fury of the elements, and here against this strong sea the strongest swimmer could not hope to contend successfully.

"Never I ween was swimmer
In such an evil case."

He swam toward the shore, but the wind striking him from one side, and urging on the sea, drove him sideways. Some progress was made, but the force of the waters was fearful, and for every foot that he moved forward he was carried six feet to leeward. He himself saw this, and calculating his chances he perceived with despair that he was already beyond the first point, and that at the present rate there was no possibility of gaining the farther point.

Already the waves leaped exultingly about him, dashing over him now more wildly, since he was exposed more than before to their full sweep. Already the rollers lay close beside him on his left. Then it seemed as though he would be engulfed. Turning his head backward with a last faint thought of trying to regain the hen-coop, so as to prolong life somewhat, he saw it far away out of his reach. Then all hope left him.

He was now at the outermost line of rollers. At the moment that he turned his head a huge wave raised him up and bore him forward. He struggled still, even in that time of despair, and fought with his enemies. They bore him onward, however, none the less helplessly, and descending carried him with them.

But now at last, as he descended with that wave, hope came back, and all his despair vanished.

For as the wave flung him downward his feet touched bottom, and he stood for a moment erect, on solid, hard sand, in water that scarcely reached above his knees. It was for a moment only that he stood, however, for the sweep of the water bore him down, and he fell forward. Before he could regain himself another wave came and hurled him farther forward.

By a violent effort he staggered to his feet. In an instant he comprehended his position. At this western end the island descended gently into the water, and the shoal which it formed extended for miles away. It was this shoal that caused the long rollers that came over them so vehemently, and in such marked contrast with the more abrupt waves of the sea behind.

In an instant he had comprehended this, and had taken his course of action.

Now he had foothold. Now the ground beneath lent its aid to his endeavor; he was no longer altogether at the mercy of the water. He bounded forward toward the shore in such a direction that he could approach it without oppos-

"HE STAGGERED UP A FEW PACES UPON THE SANDY DECLIVITY."

ing himself entirely to the waves. The point that stretched out was now within his reach. The waves rolled past it, but by moving in an oblique direction he could gain it.

Again and again the high rollers came forward, hurling him up as they caught him in their embrace, and then casting him down again. As he was caught up from the bottom he sustained himself on the moving mass, and supported himself on the crest of the wave, but as soon as his feet touched bottom again he sprang forward toward the point which now became every minute more accessible. Wave after wave came, each more furious, each more ravenous than the preceding, as though hounding one another on to make sure of their prey. But now that the hope of life was strong, and safety had grown almost assured, the deathlike weakness which but shortly before had assailed him gave way to new-born strength and unconquerable resolve.

At length he reached a place where the rollers were of less dimensions. His progress became more rapid, until at length the water became exceedingly shallow, being not more than a foot in depth. Here the first point, where the mound was, protected it from the wind and sea. This was the cove which he had noticed. The water was all white with foam, but offered scarcely any resistance to him. He had but to wade onward to the shore.

That shore was at last attained. He staggered up a few paces upon the sandy declivity, and then fell down exhausted upon the ground.

He could not move. It was late; night came on, but he lay where he had fallen, until at last he fell into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERY OF COFFIN ISLAND.

When Brandon awaked on the following morning the sun was already high in the sky. He rose at once and walked slowly up, with stiffened limbs, to a higher spot. His clothes already were partly dry, but they were uncomfortable and impeded his motion. He took off nearly every thing, and laid them out on the sand. Then he examined his pistol and the box containing cartridges. This box held some oil also, with the help of which the pistol was soon in good order. As the cartridges were encased in copper they were uninjured. He then examined a silver case which was suspended round his neck. It was cylindrical in shape, and the top unscrewed. On opening this he took out his father's letter and the inclosure, both of which were uninjured. He then rolled them up in a small compass and restored them to their place.

He now began to look about him. The storm had ceased, the waves had subsided, a slight breeze was blowing from the sea which just ruffled the water and tempered the heat. The island on which he had been cast was low, flat, and covered with a coarse grass which grew out of the sand. But the sand itself was in many places thrown up into ridges, and appeared as though it was constantly shifting and changing. The mound was not far away, and at the eastern end of the island he could see the black outline of the rock which he had noticed from the ship. The length he had before heard to be about five miles, the width appeared about one mile, and in its whole aspect it seemed nothing better than the abomination of desolation.

At the end where he was the island terminated in two points, between which there was the cove where he had found refuge. One of these points was distinguished by the mound already mentioned, which from where he stood appeared of an irregular oblong shape. The other point was low, and descended gently into the water. The island itself appeared to be merely the emergence of some sand-bank which, perhaps, had been formed by currents and eddies; for here the currents of the Strait of Sunda encounter those from the Southern and Indian oceans, and this bank lay probably near their point of union.

A short survey showed him this. It showed him also that there was but little if any hope of sustaining life, and that he had escaped drowning only perhaps to perish by the more lingering agonies of starvation.

Already hunger and thirst had begun to be felt, and how to satisfy these wants he knew not. Still he would not despair. Perhaps the *Java* might return in search of him, and his confinement would only last for a day or so.

He understood the act of Cigole in a way that was satisfactory to himself. He had thrown him overboard, but had made it appear like an accident. As he fell he had heard the shout "Man overboard!" and was now able to account for it in this way. So a faint hope remained that the captain of the *Java* would not give him up.

Still subsistence of some kind was necessary, and there was nothing to be done but to explore the sandy tract before him. Setting forth he walked toward the rock along the sea-shore. On one side toward the north the shore was shallow and sloped gently into the water; but on the southern side it descended more abruptly. The tide was out. A steep beach appeared here covered with stones to which myriads of shell-fish were attached. The sight of these suggested the idea to him that on the opposite side there might be clams in the sand. He walked over there in search of them. Here the slope was so gradual that extensive flats were left uncovered by the receding tide.

When a boy he had been sometimes accustomed to wander on sand flats near his home, and dig up these clams in sport. Now his boyish experience became useful. Myriads of little holes dotted the sand, which he knew to be the indications of these molluscs, and he at once began to scoop in the sand with his hands. In a short time he had found enough to satisfy his hunger, and what was better, he saw all around an unlimited supply of such food.

Yet food was not enough. Drink was equally necessary. The salt of these shell-fish aggravated the thirst that he had already begun to feel, and how a fear came over him that there might be no water. The search seemed a hopeless one; but he determined to seek for it nevertheless, and the only place that seemed to promise success was the rock at the eastern end. Toward this he now once more directed his steps.

The island was all of sand except the rocks on the south beach and the cliff at the eastern end. Coarse grass grew very extensively over the surface, but the sand was fine and loose, and in many places thrown up into heaps of many different shapes. The grass grew in tufts or in spires and blades, thinly scattered, and nowhere forming a sod. The soil was difficult to walk over, and Brandon sought the beach, where the damp sand afforded a firmer foothold. In about an hour and a half he reached the rock.

It was between five hundred and six hundred feet in length, and about fifty in height. There was no resemblance to a coffin now as Brandon approached it, for that likeness was only discernible at a distance. Its sides were steep and precipitous. It was one black solid mass, without any outlying crags, or any fragments near it. Its upper surface appeared to be level, and in various places it was very easy to ascend. Up one of these places Brandon climbed, and soon stood on the top.

Near him the summit was somewhat rounded; at the farther end it was flat and irregular; but between the two ends it sank into a deep hollow, where he saw that which at once excited a tumult of hope and fear. It was a pool of water at least fifty feet in diameter, and deep too, since the sides of the rock went down steeply. But was it fresh or salt? Was it the accumulation from the showers of the rainy season of the tropics, or was it but the result of the past night's

storm, which had hurled wave after wave here till the hollow was filled?

With hasty footsteps he rushed toward the margin of the pool, and bent down to taste. For a moment or so, by a very natural feeling, he hesitated, then, throwing off the fever of suspense, he bent down, kneeling on the margin, till his lips touched the water.

It was fresh! Yes, it was from the heavens above, and not from the sea below. It was the fresh rains from the sky that had filled this deep pool, and not the spray from the sea. Again and again he quaffed the refreshing liquid. Not a trace of the salt-water could be detected. It was a natural cistern which thus lay before him, formed as though for the reception of the rain. For the present, at least, he was safe.

He had food and drink. As long as the rainy season lasted, and for some time after, life was secure. Life becomes doubly sweet after being purchased by such efforts as those which Brandon had put forth, and the thought that for the present, at least, he was safe did not fail to fill him with the most buoyant hope. To him, indeed, it seemed just then as if nothing more could be desired. He had food and drink in abundance. In that climate shelter was scarcely needed. What more could he wish?

The first day was passed in exploring the rock to see if there was any place which he might select for his abode. There were several fissures in the rock at the eastern end, and one of these he selected. He then went back for his clothes, and brought them to this place. So the first day went.

All the time his eyes wandered round the horizon to see if a sail might be in sight. After two or three days, in which nothing appeared, he ceased his constant watch, though still from time to time, by a natural impulse, he continued to look. After all he thought that rescue might come. He was somewhat out of the track of the China ships, but still not very much so. An adverse wind might bring a ship close by. The hope of this sustained him.

But day succeeded to day and week to week with no appearance of any thing whatever on the wide ocean.

During these long days he passed the greater part of his time either under the shelter of the rock, where he could best avoid the hot sun, or when the sea-breeze blew on its summit. The frightful solitude offered to him absolutely nothing which could distract his thoughts, or prevent him from brooding upon the hopelessness of his situation.

Brooding thus, it became his chief occupation to read over and over his father's letter and the inclosure, and conjecture what might be his course of action if he ever escaped from this place. His father's voice seemed now to sound to him more imploringly than ever; and the winds at night, as they moaned round the rock, seemed to modulate themselves, to form their sounds to something like a wild cry, and wail forth, "Come home!" Yet that home was now surely farther removed than ever, and the winds seemed only to mock him. More sad and more despairing than Ulysses on the Ogygian shore, he too wasted away with home-sickness.

κατείβετο δὲ γλυκὺς αἰὼν νόστον ὀδυρομένῳ.

Fate thus far had been against him, and the melancholy recollections of his past life could yield nothing but despondency. Driven from home when but a boy, he had become an exile, had wandered to the other side of the world, and was just beginning to attain some prospect of a fortune when this letter came. Rising up from the prostration of that blow, he had struggled against fate, but only to encounter a more overmastering force, and this last stroke had been the worst of all. Could he rally after this? Could he now hope to escape?

Fate had been against him; but yet, perhaps, here, on this lonely island, he might find a turning-point. Here he might find that turning in the long lane which the proverb speaks of. "The day is darkest before the morn," and perhaps he would yet have Fate on his side.

But the sternest and most courageous spirit can hardly maintain its fortitude in an utter and unmitigated solitude. St. Simeon Stylites could do so, but he felt that on the top of that pillar there rested the eyes of the heavenly hosts and of admiring mankind. It is when the consciousness of utter solitude comes that the soul sinks. When the prisoner thinks that he is forgotten by the outside world, then he loses that strength which sustained him while he believed himself remembered.

It was the lot of Brandon to have this sense of utter desolation; to feel that in all the world there was not one human being that knew of his fate; and to fear that the eye of Providence only saw him with indifference. With bitterness he thought of the last words of his father's letter: "If in that other world to which I am going the disembodied spirit can assist man, then be sure, O my son, I will assist you, and in the crisis of your fate I will be near, if it is only to communicate to your spirit what you ought to do."

A melancholy smile passed over his face as he thought of what seemed to him the utter futility of that promise.

Now, as the weeks passed, his whole mode of life affected both mind and body. Yet, if it be the highest state of man for the soul to live by itself, as Socrates used to teach, and sever itself from bodily association, Brandon surely had attained, without knowing it, a most exalted stage of existence. Perhaps it was the period of purification and preparation for future work.

The weather varied incessantly, calms and storms alternating; sometimes all the sea lying dull, listless, and glassy under the burning sky; at other times both sea and sky convulsed with the war of elements.

At last there came one storm so tremendous that it exceeded all that Brandon had ever seen any where.

The wind gathered itself up from the south-east, and for a whole day the forces of the tempest collected themselves, till at last they burst in fury upon the island. In sustained violence and in the frenzy of its assault it far surpassed that first storm. Before sundown the storm was at its height, and, though yet day, the clouds were so dense and so black that it became like night. Night came on, and the storm, and roar, and darkness increased steadily every hour. So intense was the darkness that the hand, when held close by the face, could not be distinguished. So resistless was the force of the wind that Brandon, on looking out to sea, had to cling to the

rock to prevent himself from being blown away. A dense rain of spray streamed through the air, and the surf, rolling up, flung its crest all across the island. Brandon could hear beneath him, amidst some of the pauses of the storm, the hissing and bubbling of foaming waters, as though the whole island, submerged by the waves, was slowly settling down into the depths of the ocean.

Brandon's place of shelter was sufficiently elevated to be out of the reach of the waves that might rush upon the land, and on the lee-side of the rock, so that he was sufficiently protected. Sand, which he had carried up, formed his bed. In this place, which was more like the lair of a wild beast than the abode of a human being, he had to live. Many wakeful nights he had passed there, but never had he known such a night as this.

There was a frenzy about this hurricane that would have been inconceivable if he had not witnessed it. His senses, refined and rendered acute by long vigils and slender diet, seemed to detect audible words in the voice of the storm. Looking out through the gloom his sight seemed to discern shapes flitting by like lightning, as though the fabled spirits of the storm had gathered here.

It needed all the robust courage of his strong nature to sustain himself in the presence of the wild fancies that now came rushing and thronging before his mind. The words of his father sounded in his ears; he thought he heard them spoken from the air; he thought he saw an aged spectral face, wan with suffering and grief, in front of his cave. He covered his eyes with his hands, and sought to reason down his superstitious feeling. In vain. Words rang in his ears, muffled words, as though muttered in the storm, and his mind, which had brooded so long over his father's letter, now gave shape to the noise of winds and waves.

"—In the crisis of your fate I will be near."

"I shall go mad!" cried Brandon, aloud, and he started to his feet.

But the storm went on with its fury, and still his eyes saw shapes, and his ears heard fantastic sounds. So the night passed until at last the storm had exhausted itself. Then Brandon sank down and slept far on into the day.

When he awaked again the storm had subsided. The sea was still boisterous, and a fresh breeze blew which he inhaled with pleasure. After obtaining some shell-fish, and satisfying his appetite, he went to the summit of the rock for water, and then stood looking out at sea.

His eye swept the whole circuit of the horizon without seeing any thing, until at length he turned to look in a westwardly direction where the island spread out before him. Here an amazing sight met his eyes.

The mound at the other end had become completely and marvelously changed. On the previous day it had preserved its usual shape, but now it was no longer smoothly rounded. On the contrary it was irregular, the northern end being still a sort of hillock, but the middle and southern end was flat on the surface and dark in color. From the distance at which he stood it looked like a rock, around which the sand had accumulated, but which had been uncovered by the violent storm of the preceding night.

At that distance it appeared like a rock, but there was something in its shape and in its position which made it look like a ship which had been cast ashore. The idea was a startling one, and he at once dismissed it as absurd. But the more he looked the closer the resemblance grew until at last, unable to endure this suspense, he hurried off in that direction.

During all the time that he had been on the island he had never been close to the mound. He had remained for the most part in the neighborhood of the rock, and had never thought that a barren sand hillock was worthy of a visit. But now it appeared a very different object in his eyes.

He walked on over half the intervening distance, and now the resemblance instead of fading out, as he anticipated, grew more close. It was still too far to be seen very distinctly; but there, even from that distance, he saw the unmistakable outline of a ship's hull.

There was now scarcely any doubt about this. There it lay. Every step only made it more visible. He walked more quickly onward, filled with wonder, and marveling by what strange chance this vessel could have reached its present position.

There it lay. It could not by any possibility have been cast ashore on the preceding night. The mightiest billows that ever rose from ocean could never have lifted a ship so far upon the shore. To him it was certain that it must have been there for a long time, and that the sand had been heaped around it by successive storms.

As he walked nearer he regarded more closely the formation of this western end. He saw the low northern point, and then the cove where he had escaped from the sea. He noticed that the southern point where the mound was appeared to be a sort of peninsula, and the theory suggested itself to him by which he could account for this wonder. This ship, he saw, must have been wrecked at some time long before upon this island. As the shore was shallow it had run aground and stuck fast in the sand. But successive storms had continued to beat upon it until the moving sands which the waters were constantly driving about had gathered all around it higher and higher. At last, in the course of time, a vast accumulation had gathered about this obstacle till a new bank had been formed and joined to the island; and the winds had lent their aid, heaping up the loose sand on high till all the ship was covered. But last night's storm had to some extent undone the work, and now the wreck was once more exposed.

Brandon was happy in his conjecture and right in his theory. All who know any thing about the construction and nature of sand islands such as this are aware that the winds and waters work perpetual changes. The best known example of this is the far-famed Sable Island, which lies off the coast of Nova Scotia, in the direct track of vessels crossing the Atlantic between England and the United States. Here there is repeated on a far larger scale the work which Brandon saw on Coffin Island. Sable Island is twenty miles long and about one in width—the crest of a vast heap of sand which rises out of the ocean's bed. Here the wildest storms in the world rage uncontrolled, and the keepers of the light-house have but little shelter. Not long ago an enormous flag-staff was torn from out its place and hurled

"GREAT HEAVENS!" CRIED BRANDON, STARTING BACK—"THE 'VISHNU!'"

away into the sea. In fierce storms the spray drives all across, and it is impossible to venture out. But most of all, Sable Island is famous for the melancholy wrecks that have taken place there. Often vessels that have the bad fortune to run aground are broken up, but sometimes the sand gathers about them and covers them up. There are numerous mounds here which are known to conceal wrecked ships. Some of these have been opened, and the wreck beneath has been brought to view. Sometimes also after a severe gale these sandy mounds are torn away and the buried vessels are exposed.

Far away in Australia Brandon had heard of Sable Island from different sea captains who had been in the Atlantic trade. The stories which these men had to tell were all largely tinged with the supernatural. One in particular who had been wrecked there, and had taken refuge for the night in a hut built by the British Government for wrecked sailors, told some wild story about the apparition of a negro who waked him up at dead of night and nearly killed him with horror.

With all these thoughts in his mind Brandon approached the wreck and at last stood close beside it.

It had been long buried. The hull was about two-thirds uncovered. A vast heap of sand still clung to the bow, but the stern stood out full in view. Although it must have been there for a

long time the planks were still sound, for they seemed to have been preserved from decay by the sand. All the calking, however, had become loose, and the seams gaped widely. There were no masts, but the lower part of the shrouds still remained, showing that the vessel was a brig. So deeply was it buried in the sand, that Brandon, from where he stood, could look over the whole deck, he himself being almost on a level with the deck. The masts appeared to have been chopped away. The hatchways were gone. The hold appeared to be filled with sand, but there may have been only a layer of sand concealing something beneath. Part of the planking of the deck as well as most of the taffrail on the other side had been carried away. Astern there was a quarter-deck. There was no skylight, but only dead-lights set on the deck. The door of the cabin still remained and was shut tight.

All these things Brandon took in at a glance. A pensive melancholy came over him, and a feeling of pity for the inanimate ship as though she were capable of feeling. By a natural curiosity he walked around to the stern to see if he could read her name.

The stern was buried deep in the sand. He had to kneel to read it. On the side nearest him the letters were obliterated, but he saw some remaining on the opposite side. He went over there and knelt down. There were four letters still legible and part of a fifth. These were the letters:

VISHN

"Great Heavens!" cried Brandon, starting back—"the *Vishnu!*"

CHAPTER VI.

THE DWELLER IN THE SUNKEN SHIP.

After a moment of horror Brandon walked away for a short distance, and then turning he looked fixedly at the wreck for a long time.

Could this be indeed *the* ship—*the Vishnu?* By what marvelous coincidence had he thus fallen upon it? It was in 1828 that the *Vishnu* sailed from Calcutta for Manilla. Was it possible for this vessel to be preserved so long? And if so, how did it get here?

Yet why not? As to its preservation that was no matter in itself for wonder. East Indian vessels are sometimes built of mahogany, or other woods which last for immense periods. Any wood might endure for eighteen years if covered up by sand. Besides, this vessel he recollected had been laden with staves and box shooks, with other wooden materials which would keep it afloat. It might have drifted about these seas till the currents bore it here. After all it was not so wonderful that this should be the *Vishnu* of Colonel Despard.

The true marvel was that he himself should have been cast ashore here on the same place where this ship was.

He stood for a long time not caring to enter. His strength had been worn down by the privations of his island life; his nerves, usually like steel, were becoming unstrung; his mind had fallen into a morbid state, and was a prey to a thousand strange fancies. The closed doors of the cabin stood there before him, and he began to imagine that some frightful spectacle was concealed within.

Perhaps he would find some traces of that tragedy of which he had heard. Since the ship had come here, and he had been cast ashore to meet it, there was nothing which he might not anticipate.

A strange horror came over him as he looked at the cabin. But he was not the man to yield to idle fancies. Taking a long breath he walked across the island, and then back again. By that time he had completely recovered, and the only feeling now remaining was one of intense curiosity.

This time he went up without hesitation, and climbed on board the vessel. The sand was heaped up astern, the masts gone, and the hatchways torn off, as has been said. The wind which had blown the sand away had swept the decks as clean as though they had been holy-stoned. Not a rope or a spar or any movable of any kind could be seen.

He walked aft. He tried the cabin door, it was wedged fast as though part of the front. Finding it immovable he stepped back and kicked at it vigorously. A few sturdy kicks started the panel. It gradually yielded and sank in. Then the other panel followed. He could now look in and see that the sand lay inside to the depth of a foot. As yet, however, he could not enter. There was nothing else to do except to kick at it till it was all knocked away, and this after some patient labor was accomplished.

He entered. The cabin was about two feet square, lighted by dead-lights in the deck above. On each side were two state-rooms, probably intended for the ship's officers. The doors were all open. The sand had drifted in here and covered the floor and the berths. The floor of the cabin was covered with sand to the depth of a foot. There was no large opening through which it could enter; but it had probably penetrated through the cracks of the doorway in a fine, impalpable dust, and had covered every available surface within.

In the centre of the cabin was a table, secured to the floor, as ships' tables always are; and immediately over it hung the barometer which was now all corroded and covered with mould and rust. A half dozen stools were around, some lying on their sides, some upside down, and one standing upright. The door by which he had entered was at one side, on the other side was another, and between the two stood a sofa, the shape of which was plainly discernible under the sand. Over this was a clock, which had ticked its last tick.

On some racks over the closet there were a few guns and swords, intended, perhaps, for the defensive armament of the brig, but all in the last stage of rust and of decay. Brandon took one or two down, but they broke with their own weight.

The sand seemed to have drifted more deeply into the state-rooms, for while its depth in the cabin was only a foot, in these the depth was nearly two feet. Some of the bedding projected from the berths, but it was a mass of mould and crumbled at the touch.

Brandon went into each of these rooms in suc-

cession, and brushed out the heavy, wet sand from the berths. The rotten quilts and blankets fell with the sand in matted masses to the floor. In each room was a seaman's chest. Two of these were covered deeply; the other two but lightly: the latter were unlocked, and he opened the lids. Only some old clothes appeared, however, and these in the same stage of decay as every thing else. In one of them was a book, or rather what had once been a book, but now the leaves were all stuck together, and formed one lump of slime and mould. In spite of his most careful search he had thus far found nothing whatever which could be of the slightest benefit to him in his solitude and necessity.

There were still two rooms which he had not yet examined. These were at the end of the cabin, at the stern of the ship, each taking up one half of the width. The sand had drifted in here to about the same depth as in the side-rooms. He entered first the one nearest him, which was on the right side of the ship. This room was about ten feet long, extending from the middle of the ship to the side, and about six feet wide. A telescope was the first thing which attracted his attention. It lay in a rack near the doorway. He took it down, but it fell apart at once, being completely corroded. In the middle of the room there was a compass, which hung from the ceiling. But the iron pivot had rusted, and the plate had fallen down. Some more guns and swords were here, but all rusted like the others. There was a table at the wall by the stern, covered with sand. An arm-chair stood close by it, and opposite this was a couch. At the end of this room was a berth which had the same appearance as the other berths in the other rooms. The quilts and mattresses as he felt them beneath the damp sand were equally decayed. Too long had the ship been exposed to the ravages of time, and Brandon saw that to seek for any thing here which could be of the slightest service to himself was in the highest degree useless.

This last room seemed to him as though it might have been the captain's. That captain was Cigole, the very man who had flung him overboard. He had unconsciously by so doing sent him to the scene of his early crime. Was this visit to be all in vain? Thus far it seemed so. But might there not yet be something beneath this sand which might satisfy him in his search?

There still remained another room. Might there not be something there?

Brandon went back into the cabin and stood looking at the open doorway of that other room.

He hesitated. Why? Perhaps it was the thought that here was his last chance, that here his exploration must end, and if nothing came of it then all this adventure would be in vain. Then the fantastic hopes and fears which by turns had agitated him would prove to have been absurd, and he, instead of being sent by Fate as the minister of vengeance, would be only the commonplace victim of an everyday accident.

Perhaps it was some instinct within him that made known to his mind what awaited him there. For now as he stood that old horror came upon him full and strong. Weakness and excitement made his heart beat and his ears ring. Now his fancy became wild, and he recalled with painful vividness his father's words:

"In the crisis of your fate I will be near."

The horrors of the past night recurred. The air of the cabin was close and suffocating. There seemed in that dark room before him some dread Presence, he knew not what; some Being, who had uncovered this his abode and enticed him here.

He found himself rapidly falling into that state in which he would not have been able either to advance or retreat. One overmastering horror seized him. Twice his spirit sought to overcome the faintness and weakness of the flesh. Twice he stepped resolutely forward; but each time he faltered and recoiled.

Here was no place for him to summon up his strength. He could bear it no longer. He turned abruptly and rushed out from the damp, gloomy place into the warm, bright sunshine and the free air of heaven.

The air was bright, the wind blew fresh. He drank in great draughts of that delicious breeze, and the salt sea seemed to be inhaled at each breath.

The sun shone brilliantly. The sea rolled afar and all around, and sparkled before him under the sun's rays with that infinite laughter, that ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα of which Æschylus spoke in his deep love of the salt sea. Speaking parenthetically, it may be said that the only ones from among articulate speaking men who have found fitting epithets for the sea are the old Greek, the Scandinavian, and the Englishman.

Brandon drew in new strength and life with every breath, till at last he began to think once more of returning.

But even yet he feared that when he entered that cabin the spell would be on him. The thought of attempting it was intolerable. Yet what was to be done? To remain unsatisfied was equally intolerable. To go back to his rock was not to be thought of.

But an effort must be made to get rid of this womanly fear; why should he yield to this? Surely there were other thoughts which he might call to his mind. There came over him the memory of that villain who had cast him here, who now was exulting in his fancied success and bearing back to his master the news. There came to him the thought of his father, and his wrongs, and his woe. There came to his memory his father's dying words summoning him to vengeance. There came to him the thought of those who yet lived and suffered in England, at the mercy of a pitiless enemy. Should he falter at a superstitious fancy, he—who, if he lived, had so great a purpose?

All superstitious fancy faded away. The thirst for revenge, the sense of intolerable wrong arose. Fear and horror died out utterly, destroyed by Vengeance.

"The Presence, then, is my ally," he murmured. "I will go and face it."

And he walked resolutely, with a firm step, back into the cabin.

Yet even then it needed all the new-born resolution which he had summoned up, and all the thought of his wrong, to sustain him as he entered that inner room. Even then a sharp thrill passed through him, and bodily weakness could only be sustained by the strong, resolute, stubborn soul.

The room was about the size of the captain's.

"THERE

There was a table
like a leaf which
cessity. A trunk
the open lid projec
sand. Upon the w
coat and part of t
apparently fallen a
of the coat could
red, and the epaulet
to a British officer.

Brandon on ente
at a glance, and the
berth at the end of
lay whose presence
which he knew by
be here.

There It awaited
had covered it, like
while beyond that
was turned toward h
whose hollow cavitie
cancy, but rather da
ily at him: dark eye
had been thus fixe
watching wistfully f
trance through that

"THERE SEEMED A GHASTLY COMICALITY IN SUCH A THING AS THIS," ETC.

There was a table against the side, which looked like a leaf which could hang down in case of necessity. A trunk stood opposite the door, with the open lid projecting upward out of a mass of sand. Upon the wall there hung the collar of a coat and part of the shoulders, the rest having apparently fallen away from decay. The color of the coat could still be distinguished: it was red, and the epaulets showed that it had belonged to a British officer.

Brandon on entering took in all these details at a glance, and then his eyes were drawn to the berth at the end of the room, where that Thing lay whose presence he had felt and feared, and which he knew by an internal conviction must be here.

There It awaited him, on the berth. Sand had covered it, like a coverlet, up to the neck, while beyond that protruded the head. It was turned toward him: a bony, skeleton head, whose hollow cavities seemed not altogether vacancy, but rather dark eyes which looked gloomily at him; dark eyes fixed, motionless; which had been thus fixed through the long years, watching wistfully for him, expecting his entrance through that doorway. And this was the Being who had assisted him to the shore, and who had thrown off the covering of sand with which he had concealed himself, so as to bring him here before him. Brandon stood motionless, mute. The face was turned toward him—that face which is at once human and yet most frightful, since it is the face of Death—the face of a skeleton. The jaws had fallen apart, and that fearful grin which is fixed on the fleshless face here seemed like an effort at a smile of welcome.

The hair still clung to that head, and hung down over the fleshless forehead, giving it more the appearance of Death in life, and lending a new horror to that which already pervaded this Dweller in the Ship.

"The nightmare Life-in-Death was he,
That thicks men's blood with cold."

Brandon stood while his blood ran chill, and his breath came fast.

If that Form had suddenly thrown off its sandy coverlet and risen to his feet, and advanced with extended hand to meet him, he would not have been surprised, nor would he have been one whit more horror-stricken.

Brandon stood fixed. He could not move.

He was like one in a nightmare. His limbs seemed rigid. A spell was upon him. His eyes seemed to fasten themselves on the hollow cavities of the Form before him. But under that tremendous pressure he did not altogether sink. Slowly his spirit rose; a thought of flight came, but it was instantly rejected. The next moment he drew a long breath. "I'm an infernal fool and coward," he muttered. He took three steps forward, and stood beside the Figure. He laid his hand firmly upon the head; the hair fell off at his touch. "Poor devil," said he, "I'll bury your bones at any rate." The spell was broken, and Brandon was himself again.

Once more Brandon walked out into the open air, but this time there was not a vestige of horror left. He had encountered what he dreaded, and it was now in his eyes only a mass of bones. Yet there was much to think of, and the struggle which had raged within him had exhausted him.

The sea-breeze played about him and soon restored his strength. What next to do was the question, and after some deliberation he decided at once to remove the skeleton and bury it.

A flat board which had served as a shelf supplied him with an easy way of turning up the sand. Occupation was pleasant, and in an hour or two he had scooped out a place large enough for the purpose which he had in view. He then went back into the inner cabin.

Taking his board he removed carefully the sand which had covered the skeleton. The clothes came away with it. As he moved his board along it struck something hard. He could not see in that dim light what it was, so he reached down his hand and grasped it.

It was something which the fingers of the skeleton also encircled, for his own hand as he grasped it touched those fingers. Drawing it forth he perceived that it was a common junk bottle tightly corked.

There seemed a ghastly comicality in such a thing as this, that this lately dreaded Being should be nothing more than a common skeleton, and that he should be discovered in this bed of horror doing nothing more dignified than clutching a junk bottle like a sleeping drunkard. Brandon smiled faintly at the idea; and then thinking that, if the liquor were good, it at least would be welcome to him in his present situation. He walked out upon the deck, intending to open it and test its contents. So he sat down, and, taking his knife, he pushed the cork in. Then he smelled the supposed liquor to see what it might be. There was only a musty odor. He looked in. The bottle appeared to be filled with paper. Then the whole truth flashed upon his mind. He struck the bottle upon the deck. It broke to atoms, and there lay a scroll of paper covered with writing.

He seized it eagerly, and was about opening it to read what was written when he noticed something else that also had fallen from the bottle.

It was a cord about two yards in length, made of the entrail of some animal, and still as strong and as flexible as when it was first made. He took it up carefully, wondering why such a thing as this should have been so carefully sealed up and preserved when so many other things had been neglected.

The cord, on a close examination, presented nothing very remarkable except the fact that, though very thin, it appeared to have been not twisted but plaited in a very peculiar manner out of many fine strands. The intention had evidently been to give to it the utmost possible strength together with the smallest size. Brandon had heard of cords used by Malays and Hindus for assassination, and this seemed like the description which he had read of them.

At one end of the cord was a piece of bronze about the size of a common marble, to which the cord was attached by a most peculiar knot. The bronze itself was intended to represent the head of some Hindu idol, the grotesque ferocity of its features, and the hideous grimace of the mouth being exactly like what one may see in the images of Mother Kali or Bowhani.

At once the cord associated itself in his mind with the horrors which he had heard of as having been perpetrated in the names of these frightful deities, and it seemed now to be more than a common one. He carefully wound it up, placed it in his pocket, and prepared to examine the manuscript.

The sun was high in the heavens, the sea-breeze still blew freshly, while Brandon, opening the manuscript, began to read.

CHAPTER VII.

MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A BOTTLE.

"BRIG 'VISHNU,' ADRIFT IN THE CHINESE SEA.
July 10, 1828.

"WHOEVER finds this let him know that I, Lionel Despard, Colonel of H. M. 37th Regiment, have been the victim of a foul conspiracy performed against me by the captain and crew of the brig *Vishnu*, and especially by my servant, John Potts.

"Expecting at any time to perish, adrift helplessly, at the mercy of winds and waves, I sit down now before I die, to write all the circumstances of this affair. I will inclose the manuscript in a bottle and fling it into the sea, trusting in God that he may cause it to be borne to those who may be enabled to read my words so that they may know my fate and bring the guilty to justice. Whoever finds this let him, if possible, have it sent to my friend, Ralph Brandon, of Brandon Hall, Devonshire, England, who will do more than any other man to cause justice to have its due.

"To further the ends of justice and to satisfy the desires of my friends, I will write an account of the whole case.

"In the name of God, I declare that John Potts is guilty of my death. He was my servant. I first found him in India under very remarkable circumstances.

"It was in the year 1826. The Government was engaged in an effort to put down bands of assassins by whom the most terrific atrocities had been committed, and I was appointed to conduct the work in the district of Agra.

"The Thuggee society is still a mystery, though its nature may yet be revealed if they can only capture the chief* and make him confess. As yet it is not fully known, and though I have

* The chief was captured in 1830, and by his confession all the atrocious system of Thuggee was revealed.

heard much which I have reported to the Government, yet I am slow to believe that any human beings can actually practice what I have heard.

"The assassins whom I was pursuing eluded our pursuit with marvelous agility and cunning, but one by one we captured them, and punished them summarily. At last we surrounded a band of Thugs, and to our amazement found among them a European and a small boy. After our attack the Hindus made a desperate resistance, and killed themselves rather than fall into our hands; but the European, leading forward the little boy, fell on his knees and implored us to save him.

"I had heard that an Englishman had joined these wretches, and at first thought that this was the man; so, desirous of capturing him, I ordered my men whenever they found him to spare his life if possible. This man was at once seized and brought before me.

"He had a piteous story to tell. He said that his name was John Potts, that he belonged to Southampton, and had been in India a year. He had come to Agra to look out for employ as a servant, and had been caught by the Thugs. They offered to spare his life if he would join them. According to him they always make this offer. If it had only been himself that was concerned he said that he would have died a hundred times rather than have accepted; but his little boy was with him, and to save his life he consented, hoping that somehow or other he might escape. They then received him with some horrible ceremonies, and marked on his arm and on the arm of his son, on the inner part of the right elbow, the name of Bowhani in Hindu characters. Potts showed me his arm and that of his son in proof of this.

"He had been with them, according to his own account, about three months, and his life had been one continuous horror. He had picked up enough of their language to conjecture to some extent the nature of their belief, which, he asserted, would be most important information for the Government. The Thugs had treated him very kindly, for they looked upon him as one of themselves, and they are all very humane and affectionate to one another. His worst fear had been that they would compel him to do murder; and he would have died, he declared, rather than consent; but, fortunately, he was spared. The reason of this, he said, was because they always do their murder by strangling, since the shedding of blood is not acceptable to their divinity. He could not do this, for it requires great dexterity. Almost all their strangling is done by a thin, strong cord, curiously twisted, about six feet in length, with a weight at one end, generally carved so as to represent the face of Bowhani. This they throw with a peculiar jerk around the neck of their victim. The weight swings the cord round and round, while the strangler pulls at the other end, and death is inevitable. His hands, he said, were coarse and clumsy, unlike the delicate Hindu hands; and so, although they forced him to practice incessantly, he could not learn. He said nothing about the boy, but, from what I saw of that boy afterward, I believe that nature created him especially to be a Thug, and have no doubt that he learned then to wield the cord with as much dexterity as the best strangler of them all.

"His association with them had shown him much of their ordinary habits and some of their beliefs. I gathered from what he said that the basis of the Thuggee society is the worship of Bowhani, a frightful demon, whose highest joy is the sight of death or dead bodies. Those who are her disciples must offer up human victims killed without the shedding of blood, and the more he can kill the more of a saint he becomes. The motive for this is never gain, for they rarely plunder, but purely religious zeal. The reward is an immortality of bliss hereafter, which Bowhani will secure them; a life like that of the Mohammedan Paradise, where there are material joys to be possessed forever without satiety. Destruction, which begins as a kind of duty, becomes also at last, and naturally perhaps, an absorbing passion. As the hunter in pursuing his prey is carried away by excitement and the enthusiasm of the chase, or, in hunting the tiger, feels the delight of braving danger and displaying courage, so here that same passion is felt to an extraordinary degree, for it is *man* that must be pursued and destroyed. Here, in addition to courage, the hunter of man must call into exercise cunning, foresight, eloquence, intrigue. All this I afterward brought to the attention of the Government with very good results.

"Potts declared that night and day he had been on the watch for a chance to escape, but so infernal was the cunning of these wretches, and so quick their senses, sharpened as they had been by long practice, that success became hopeless. He had fallen into deep dejection, and concluded that his only hope lay in the efforts of the Government to put down these assassins. Our appearance had at last saved him.

"Neither I, nor any of my men, nor any Englishman who heard this story, doubted for an instant the truth of every word. All the newspapers mentioned with delight the fact that an Englishman and his son had been rescued. Pity was felt for that father who, for his son's sake, had consented to dwell amidst scenes of terror, and sympathy for the anguish that he must have endured during that terrific captivity. A thrill of horror passed through all our Anglo-Indian society at the revelation which he made about Thuggee; and so great was the feeling in his favor that a handsome subscription was made up for him by the officers at Agra.

"For my part I believed in him most implicitly, and, as I saw him to be unusually clever, I engaged him at once to be my servant. He staid with me, and every month won more and more of my confidence. He had a good head for business. Matters of considerable delicacy which I intrusted to him were well performed, and at last I thought it the most fortunate circumstance in my Indian life that I had found such a man.

"After about three years he expressed a wish to go to England for the sake of his son. He thought India a bad place for a boy, and wished to try and start in some business in his native land for his son's sake.

"That boy had always been my detestation—a crafty, stealthy, wily, malicious little demon, who was a perfect Thug in his nature, without any religious basis to his Thuggeeism. I pitied Potts for being the father of such a son. I could not let the little devil live in my house; his cru-

elty to animals which he delighted to torture, his thieving propensities, and his infernal deceit, were all so intolerable. He was not more than twelve, but he was older in iniquity than many a gray-headed villain. To oblige Potts, whom I still trusted implicitly, I wrote to my old friend Ralph Brandon, of Brandon Hall, Devonshire, requesting him to do what he could for so deserving a man.

"Just about this time an event occurred which has brought me to this.

"My sweet wife had been ill for two years. I had obtained a faithful nurse in the person of a Mrs. Compton, a poor creature, but gentle and affectionate, for whom my dear love's sympathy had been excited. No one could have been more faithful than Mrs. Compton, and I sent my darling to the hill station at Assurabad in hopes that the cooler air might reinvigorate her.

"She died. It is only a month or two since that frightful blow fell and crushed me. To think of it overwhelms me—to write of it is impossible.

"I could think of nothing but to fly from my unendurable grief. I wished to get away from India any where. Before the blow crushed me I hoped that I might carry my darling to the Cape of Good Hope, and therefore I remitted there a large sum; but after she left me I cared not where I went, and finding that a vessel was going to Manilla I decided to go there.

"It was Potts who found out this. I now know that he engaged the vessel, put the crew on board, who were all creatures of his own, and took the route to Manilla for the sake of carrying out his designs on me. To give every thing a fair appearance the vessel was laden with store and things of that sort, for which there was a demand at Manilla. It was with the most perfect indifference that I embarked. I cared not where I went, and hoped that the novelty of the sea voyage might benefit me.

"The captain was an Italian named Cigole, a low-browed, evil-faced villain. The mate was named Clark. There were three Lascars, who formed the small crew. Potts came with me, and also an old servant of mine, a Malay, whose life I had saved years before. His name was Uracao. It struck me that the crew was a small one, but I thought the captain knew his business better than I, and so I gave myself no concern.

"After we embarked Potts's manner changed very greatly. I remember this now, though I did not notice it at the time, for I was almost in a kind of stupor. He was particularly insolent to Uracao. I remember once thinking indifferently that Potts would have to be reprimanded, or kicked, or something of that sort, but was not capable of any action.

"Uracao had for years slept in front of my door when at home, and, when traveling, in the same room. He always waked at the slightest noise. He regarded his life as mine, and thought that he was bound to watch over me till I died. Although this was often inconvenient, yet it would have broken the affectionate fellow's heart if I had forbidden it, so it went on. Potts made an effort to induce him to sleep forward among the Lascars, but though Uracao had borne insolence from him without a murmur, this proposal made his eyes kindle with a menacing fire which silenced the other into fear.

"The passage was a quick one, and at last we were only a few days' sail from Manilla. Now our quiet came to an end. One night I was awakened by a tremendous struggle in my cabin. Starting up, I saw in the gloom two figures struggling desperately. It was impossible to see who they were. I sprang from the berth and felt for my pistols. They were gone.

"'What the devil is this?' I roared fiercely.

"No answer came; but the next moment there was a tremendous fall, and one of the men clung to the other, whom he held downward. I sprang from my berth. There were low voices out in the cabin.

"'You can't,' said one voice, which I recognized as Clark's. 'He has his pistols.'

"'He hasn't,' said the voice of Cigole. 'Potts took them away. He's unarmed.'

"'Who are you?' I cried, grasping the man who was holding the other down.

"'Uracao,' said he. 'Get your pistols or you're lost!'

"'What the devil is the matter?' I cried, angrily, for I had not even yet a suspicion.

"'Feel around your neck,' said he.

"Hastily I put my hand up. A thrill of horror passed through me. It was the Thuggee cord.

"'Who is this?' I cried, grasping the man who had fallen.

"'Potts,' cried Uracao. 'Your pistols are under your berth. Quick! Potts tried to strangle you. There's a plot. The Lascars are Thugs. I saw the mark on their arms, the name of Bowhani in Hindu letters.'

"All the truth now seemed to flash across me. I leaped back to the berth to look under it for my pistols. As I stooped there was a rush behind me.

"'Help! Clark! Quick!' cried the voice of Potts. 'This devil's strangling me!'

"At this a tumult arose round the two men. Uracao was dragged off. Potts rose to his feet. At that moment I found my pistols. I could not distinguish persons, but I ran the risk and fired. A sharp cry followed. Somebody was wounded.

"'Damn him!' cried Potts, 'he's got the pistols.'

"The next moment they had all rushed out, dragging Uracao with them. The door was drawn to violently with a bang and fastened on the outside. They had captured the only man who could help me, and I was a prisoner at the mercy of these miscreants.

"All the remainder of the night and until the following morning I heard noises and trampling to and fro, but had no idea whatever of what was going on. I felt indignation at the treachery of Potts, who, I now perceived, had deceived me all along, but had no fear whatever of any thing that might happen. Death was rather grateful than otherwise. Still I determined to sell my life as dearly as possible, and, loading my pistol once more, I waited for them to come. The only anxiety which I felt was about my poor faithful Malay.

"But time passed, and at last all was still. There was no sound either of voices or of footsteps. I waited for what seemed hours in impatience, until finally I could endure it no longer. I was not going to die like a dog, but determined at all hazards to go out armed, face them, and meet my doom at once.

"A few vigorous kicks at the door broke it open and I walked out. There was no one in the cabin. I went out on deck. There was no one there. I saw it all. I was deserted. More; the brig had settled down so low in the water that the sea was up to her gunwales. I looked out over the ocean to see if I could perceive any trace of them—Potts and the rest. I saw nothing. They must have left long before. A faint smoke in the hatchway attracted my attention. Looking there, I perceived that it had been burned away. The villains had evidently tried to scuttle the brig, and then, to make doubly sure, had kindled a fire on the cargo, thinking that the wooden materials of which it was composed would kindle readily. But the water had rushed in too rapidly for the flames to spread; nevertheless, the water was not able to do its work, for the wood cargo kept the brig afloat. She was water-logged but still floating.

"The masts and shrouds were all cut away. The vessel was now little better than a raft, and was drifting at the mercy of the ocean currents. For my part I did not much care. I had no desire to go to Manilla or any where else; and the love of life which is usually so strong did not exist. I should have preferred to have been killed or drowned at once. Instead of that I lived.

"She died on June 15. It was the 2d of July when this occurred which I have narrated. It is now the 10th. For a week I have been drifting I know not where. I have seen no land. There are enough provisions and water on board to sustain me for months. The weather has been fine thus far.

"I have written this with the wish that whoever may find it will send it to Ralph Brandon, Esq., of Brandon Hall, Devonshire, that he may see that justice is done to Potts, and the rest of the conspirators. Let him also try, if it be not too late, to save Uracao. If this fall into the hands of any one going to England let it be delivered to him as above, but if the finder be going to India let him place it in the hands of the Governor-General; if to China or any other place, let him give it to the authorities, enjoining them, however, after using it, to send it to Ralph Brandon as above.

"It will be seen by this that John Potts was in connection with the Thugs, probably for the sake of plundering those whom they murdered; that he conspired against me and tried to kill me; and that he has wrought my death (for I expect to die). An examination of my desk shows that he has taken papers and bank bills to the amount of four thousand pounds with him. It was this, no doubt, that induced him to make this attempt against me.

"I desire also hereby to appoint Henry Thornton, Sen., Esq., of Holby Pembroke, Solicitor, my executor and the guardian of my son Courtenay, to whom I bequeath a father's blessing and all that I possess. Let him try to secure my money in Cape Town for my boy, and, if possible, to regain for him the four thousand pounds which Potts has carried off.

"Along with this manuscript I also inclose the strangling cord.

"May God have mercy upon my soul! Amen.

"LIONEL DESPARD."

"*July* 28.—Since I wrote this there has been a series of tremendous storms. The weather has cleared up again. I have seen no land and no ship.

"*July* 31.—Land to-day visible at a great distance on the south. I know not what land it may be. I can not tell in what direction I am drifting.

"*August* 2.—Land visible toward the southwest. It seems like the summit of a range of mountains, and is probably fifty miles distant.

"*August* 5.—A sail appeared on the horizon. It was too distant to perceive me. It passed out of sight.

"*August* 10.—A series of severe gales. The sea [illegible]ys rolls over the brig in these storms, and [illegible]times seems about to carry her down.

"*August* 20.—Storms and calms alternating. When will this end?

"*August* 25.—Land again toward the west. It seems as though I may be drifting among the islands of the Indian Archipelago.

"*September* 2.—I have been sick for a week. Unfortunately I am beginning to recover again. A faint blue streak in the north seems like land.

"*September* 10.—Open water.

"*September* 23.—A series of storms. How the brig can stand it I can not see. I remember Potts telling me that she was built of mahogany and copper-fastened. She does not appear to be much injured. I am exceedingly weak from want and exposure. It is with difficulty that I can move about.

"*October* 2.—Three months adrift. My God have mercy on me, and make haste to deliver me! A storm is rising. Let all Thy waves and billows overwhelm me, O Lord!

"*October* 5.—A terrific storm. Raged three days. The brig has run aground. It is a low island, with a rock about five miles away. Thank God, my last hour is at hand. The sea is rushing in with tremendous violence, hurling sand upon the brig. I shall drift no more. I can scarcely hold this pen. These are my last words. This is for Ralph Brandon. My blessing for my loved son. I feel death coming. Whether the storm takes me or not, I must die.

"Whoever finds this will take it from my hand, and, in the name of God, I charge him to do my bidding."

This was the last. The concluding pages of the manuscript were scarcely legible. The entries were meagre and formal, but the handwriting spoke of the darkest despair. What agonies had this man not endured during those three months!

Brandon folded up the manuscript reverentially, and put it into his pocket. He then went back into the cabin. Taking the bony skeleton hand he exclaimed, in a solemn voice, "In the name of God, if I am saved, I swear to do your bidding!"

He next proceeded to perform the last offices to the remains of Colonel Despard. On removing the sand something bright struck his eye. It was a gold locket. As he tried to open it the rusty hinge broke, and the cover came off.

It was a painting on enamel, which was as bright as when made—the portrait of a beautiful woman, with pensive eyes, and delicate, intellectual expression; and appeared as though

"THREE MONTHS ADRIFT."

It might have been worn around the Colonel's neck. Brandon sighed, then putting this in his pocket with the manuscript he proceeded to his task. In an hour the remains were buried in the grave on Coffin Island.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SIGNAL OF FIRE.

THE wreck broke in upon the monotony of Brandon's island life and changed the current of his thoughts. The revelations contained in Despard's manuscript came with perfect novelty to his mind. Potts, his enemy, now stood before him in darker colors, the foulest of miscreants, one who had descended to an association with Thuggee, one who bore on his arm the dread mark of Bowhani. Against such an enemy as this he would have to be wary. If this enemy suspected his existence could he not readily find means to effect his destruction forever? Who could tell what mysterious allies this man might have? Cigole had tracked and followed him with the patience and vindictiveness of a blood-hound. There might be many such as he. He saw plainly that if he ever escaped his first and highest necessity would be to work in secret, to conceal his true name, and to let it be supposed that Louis Brandon had been drowned, while another name would enable him to do what he wished.

The message of Despard was now a sacred legacy to himself. The duty which the murdered man had imposed upon his father must now be inherited by him. Even this could scarcely add to the obligations to vengeance under which he already lay; yet it freshened his passion and quickened his resolve.

The brig was a novelty to him here, and as day succeeded to day he found occupation in searching her. During the hotter part of the day he busied himself in shoveling out the sand from the cavern with a board. In the cool of the morning or evening he worked at the hatchway. Here he soon reached the cargo.

This cargo consisted of staves and short boards. All were blackened, and showed traces of fire. The fire seemed to have burned down to a depth of four feet, and two or three feet under the sides; then the water coming in had quenched it.

He drew out hundreds of these staves and boards, which were packed in bundles, six boards being nailed together as box-shooks, and thirty or forty staves. These he threw out upon the deck and on the sand. What remained he drew about and scattered loosely in the hold of the vessel. He did this with a purpose, for he looked forward to the time when some ship might pass, and it would then be necessary to attract her attention. There was no way of doing so. He had no pole, and if he had it might not be noticed. A fire would be the surest way of drawing attention, and all this wood gave him the means of building one. He scattered it about

on the sand, so that it might dry in the hot sun.

Yet it was also necessary to have some sort of a signal to elevate in case of need. He had nothing but a knife to work with; yet patient effort will do much, and after about a week he had cut away the rail that ran along the quarter-deck, which gave him a pole some twenty feet in length. The nails that fastened the boards were all rusted so that they could not be used in attaching any thing to this. He decided when the time came to tie his coat to it, and use that as a flag. It certainly ought to be able to attract attention.

Occupied with such plans and labors and purposes as these, the days passed quickly for two weeks. By that time the fierce rays of the sun had dried every board and stave so that it became like tinder. The ship itself felt the heat; the seams gaped more widely, the boards warped and fell away from their rusty nails, the timbers were exposed all over it, and the hot, dry wind penetrated every cranny. The interior of the hold and the cabin became free from damp, and hot and dry.

Then Brandon flung back many of the boards and staves loosely; and after enough had been thrown there he worked laboriously for days cutting up large numbers of the boards into fine splints, until at last a huge pile of these shavings were accumulated. With these and his pistol he would be able to obtain light and fire in the time of need.

The post which he had cut off was then sharpened at one end, so that he could fix it in the sand when the time came, should it ever come. Here, then, these preparations were completed.

After all his labor in the cabin nothing was found. The bedding, the mattresses, the chests, the nautical instruments had all been ruined. The tables and chairs fell to pieces when the sand was removed; the doors and wood-work sank away; the cabin when cleared remained a wreck.

The weather continued hot and dry. At night Brandon flung himself down wherever he happened to be, either at the brig or at the rock. Every day he had to go to the rock for water, and also to look out toward the sea from that side. At first, while intent upon his work at the ship, the sight of the barren horizon every day did not materially affect him; he rose superior to despondency and cheered himself with his task. But at length, at the end of about three weeks, all this work was done and nothing more remained. His only idea was to labor to effect his escape, and not to insure his comfort during his stay.

Now as day succeeded to day all his old gloom returned. The excitement of the last few weeks had acted favorably upon his bodily health, but when this was removed he began to feel more than his old weakness. Such diet as his might sustain nature, but it could not preserve health. He grew at length to loathe the food which he had to take, and it was only by a stern resolve that he forced himself to swallow it.

At length a new evil was superadded to those which had already afflicted him. During the first part of his stay the hollow or pool of water on the rock had always been kept filled by the frequent rains. But now for three weeks, in fact ever since the uncovering of the *Vishnu*, not a single drop of rain had fallen. The sun shone with intense heat, and the evaporation was great. The wind at first tempered this heat somewhat, but at last this ceased to blow by day, and often for hours there was a dead calm, in which the water of the sea lay unruffled and all the air was motionless.

If there could only have been something which he could stretch over that precious pool of water he might then have arrested its flight. But he had nothing, and could contrive nothing. Every day saw a perceptible decrease in its volume, and at last it went down so low that he thought he could count the number of days that were left him to live. But his despair could not stay the operation of the laws of nature, and he watched the decrease of that water as one watches the failing breath of a dying child.

Many weeks passed, and the water of the pool still diminished. At last it had sunk so low that Brandon could not hope to live more than another week unless rain came, and that now he could scarcely expect. The look-out became more hopeless, and at length his thoughts, instead of turning toward escape, were occupied with deliberating whether he would probably die of starvation or simple physical exhaustion. He began to enter into that state of mind which he had read in Despard's MSS., in which life ceases to be a matter of desire, and the only wish left is to die as quickly and as painlessly as possible.

At length one day as his eyes swept the waters mechanically out of pure habit, and not expecting any thing, he saw far away to the northeast something which looked like a sail. He watched it for an hour before he fairly decided that it was not some mocking cloud. But at the end of that time it had grown larger, and had assumed a form which no cloud could keep so long.

Now his heart beat fast, and all the old longing for escape, and the old love of life returned with fresh vehemence. This new emotion overpowered him, and he did not try to struggle with it.

Now had come the day and the hour when all life was in suspense. This was his first hope, and he felt that it must be his last. Experience had shown that the island must lie outside the common track of vessels, and, in the ordinary course of things, if this passed by he could not hope to see another.

Now he had to decide how to attract her notice. She was still far away, yet she was evidently drawing nearer. The rock was higher than the mound and more conspicuous. He determined to carry his signal there, and erect it somewhere on that place. So he took up the heavy staff, and bore it laboriously over the sand till he reached the rock.

By the time that he arrived there the vessel had come nearer. Her top-sails were visible above the horizon. Her progress was very slow, for there was only very little wind. Her studding-sails were all set to catch the breeze, and her course was such that she came gradually nearer. Whether she would come near enough to see the island was another question. Yet if they thought of keeping a look-out, if the men in the tops had glasses, this rock and the signal could easily be seen. He feared, however, that this would not be thought of. The existence of Coffin Island was

"STILL HE STOOD THERE, HOLDING ALOFT HIS SIGNAL."

not generally known, and if they supposed that there was only open water here they would not be on the look-out at all.

Nevertheless Brandon erected his signal, and as there was no place on the solid rock where he could insert it he held it up in his own hands. Hours passed. The ship had come very much nearer, but her hull was not yet visible. Still he stood there under the burning sun, holding aloft his signal. Fearing that it might not be sufficiently conspicuous he fastened his coat to the top, and then waved it slowly backward and forward.

The ship moved more slowly than ever; but still it was coming nearer; for after some time, which seemed to that lonely watcher like entire days, her hull became visible, and her course still lay nearer.

Now Brandon felt that he must be noticed. He waved his signal incessantly. He even leaped in the air, so that he might be seen. He thought that the rock would surely be perceived from the ship, and if they looked at that they would see the figure upon it.

Then despondency came over him. The hull of the ship was visible, but it was only the uppermost line of the hull. He was standing on the very top of the rock, on its highest point. From the deck they could not see the rock itself. He stooped down, and perceived that the hull of the ship sank out of sight. Then he knew that the rock would not be visible to them at all. Only the upper half of his body could by any possibility be visible, and he knew enough of the sea to understand that this would have the dark sea for a back-ground to observers in the ship, and therefore could not be seen.

Still he would not yield to the dejection that was rapidly coming over him, and deepening into despair every minute. Never before had he so clung to hope—never before had his soul been more indomitable in its resolution, more vigorous in its strong self-assertion.

He stood there still waving his staff as though his life now depended upon that dumb yet eloquent signal—as though, like Moses, as long as his arms were erect, so long would he be able to triumph over the assault of despair. Hours passed. Still no notice was taken of him. Still the ship held on her course slowly, yet steadily, and no change of direction, no movement of any kind whatever, showed that he had been seen. What troubled him now was the idea that the ship did not come any nearer. This at first he

refused to believe, but at last he saw it beyond doubt, for at length the hull was no longer visible above the horizon.

The ship was now due north from the rock, sailing on a line directly parallel with the island. It came no nearer. It was only passing by it. And now Brandon saw that his last hope of attracting attention by the signal was gone. The ship was moving onward to the west, and every minute would make it less likely that those on board could see the rock.

During the hours in which he had watched the ship he had been busy conjecturing what she might be, and from what port she might have come. The direction indicated China almost undoubtedly. He depicted in his mind a large, commodious, and swift ship, with many passengers on their way back to England. He imagined pleasant society, and general intercourse. His fancy created a thousand scenes of delightful association with "the kindly race of men." All earthly happiness seemed to him at that time to find its centre on board that ship which passed before his eyes.

The seas were bright and sparkling, the skies calm and deeply blue, the winds breathed softly, the white swelling sails puffed out like clouds against the blue sky beyond. That ship seemed to the lonely watcher like Heaven itself. Oh! to pass beyond the limits of this narrow sandy waste! to cross the waters and enter there! Oh! to reach that ship which moved on so majestically, to enter there and be at rest!

It was not given him to enter there. Brandon soon saw this. The ship moved farther away. Already the sun was sinking, and the sudden night of the tropics was coming swiftly on. There was no longer any hope.

He flung the staff down till it broke asunder on the hard rock, and stood for a few moments looking out at sea in mute despair.

Yet could he have known what was shortly to be the fate of that ship—shortly, only in a few days—he would not have despaired, he would have rejoiced, since if death were to be his lot it were better to die where he was than to be rescued and gain the sweet hope of life afresh, and then have that hope extinguished in blood.

But Brandon did not remain long in idleness. There was yet one resource—one which he had already thought of through that long day, but hesitated to try, since he would have to forsake his signal-station; and to remain there with his staff seemed to him then the only purpose of his life. Now since the signal-staff had failed, he had broken it, as some magician might break the wand which had failed to work its appropriate spell, and other things were before him. He took his coat and descended from the rock to make a last effort for life. He walked back through the gathering gloom toward the wreck. He did not run, nor did he in any way exhibit any excitement whatever. He walked with a firm step over the sand, neither hastening on nor lagging back, but advancing calmly.

Before he had gone half-way it was dark. The sun had gone down in a sea of fire, and the western sky, after flaming for a time, had sunk into darkness. There was no moon. The stars shone dimly from behind a kind of haze that overspread the sky. The wind came up more freshly from the east, and Brandon knew that this wind would carry the ship which he wished to attract further and further away. That ship had now died out in the dark of the ebon sea; the chances that he could catch its notice were all against him, yet he never faltered.

He had come to a fixed resolution, which was at all hazards to kindle his signal-fire, whatever the chances against him might be. He thought that the flames flaring up would of necessity attract attention, and that the vessel might turn, or lie-to, and try to discover what this might be. If this last hope failed, he was ready to die. Death had now become to him rather a thing to be desired than avoided. For he knew that it was only a change of life; and how much better would life be in a spiritual world than life on this lonely isle.

This decision to die took away despair. Despair is only possible to those who value this earthly life exclusively. To the soul that looks forward to endless life despair can never come.

It was with this solemn purpose that Brandon went to the wreck, seeking by a last chance after life, yet now prepared to relinquish it. He had struggled for life all these weeks; he had fought and wrestled for life with unutterable spiritual agony, all day long, on the summit of that rock, and now the bitterness of death was past.

An hour and a half was occupied in the walk over the sand to the wreck. Fresh waves of dark had come over all things, and now, though there were no clouds, yet the gloom was intense, and faint points of light in the sky above showed where the stars might be. Where now was the ship for which Brandon sought? He cared not. He was going to kindle his signal-fire. The wind was blowing freshly by the time that he reached the place. Such a wind had not blown for weeks. It would take the ship away farther. What mattered it? He would seize his last chance, if it were only to put that last chance away forever, and thus make an end of suspense.

All his preparations had long since been made; the dry wood lay loosely thrown about the hold; the pile of shavings and fine thread-like splinters was there awaiting him. He had only to apply the fire.

He took his linen handkerchief and tore it up into fine threads, these he tore apart again and rubbed in his hand till they were almost as loose as lint. He then took these loose fibres, and descending into the hold, put them underneath the pile which he had prepared. Then he took his pistol, and holding it close to the lint fired it.

The explosion rang out with startling force in the narrow hull of the ship, the lint received the fire and glowed with the sparks into spots of red heat. Brandon blew with his breath, and the wind streaming down lent its assistance.

In a few moments the work was done.

It blazed!

But scarcely had the first flame appeared than a puff of wind came down and extinguished it. The sparks, however, were there yet. It was as though the fickle wind were tantalizing him—at one time helping, at another baffling him. Once more Brandon blew. Once more the blaze arose. Brandon flung his coat skirts in front of it till it might gather strength. The blaze ran rapidly through the fine splints, it extended itself toward the shavings, it threw its arms upward to the larger sticks.

The dry wood kindled. A million sparks flew out as it cracked under the assault of the devouring fire. The flame spread itself out to a larger volume; it widened, expanded, and clasped the kindling all around in its fervid embrace. The flame had been baffled at first; but now, as if to assert its own supremacy, it rushed out in all directions, with something that seemed almost like exultation. That flame had once been conquered by the waters in this very ship. The wood had saved the ship from the waters. It was as though the WOOD had once invited the FIRE to union, but the WATER had stepped in and prevented the union by force; as though the WOOD, resenting the interference, had baffled the assaults of the WATER, and saved itself intact through the long years for the embrace of its first love.

Now the FIRE sought the WOOD once more after so many years, and in ardor unspeakable embraced its bride.

Such fantastic notions passed through Brandon's fancy as he looked at the triumph of the flame. But he could not stay there long, and as he had not made up his mind to give himself to the flames he clambered up quickly out of the hatchway and stood upon the sand without.

The smoke was pouring through the hatchway, the black voluminous folds being rendered visible by the glow of the flames beneath, which now had gained the ascendency, and set all the winds at defiance. Indeed it was so now that whatever wind came only assisted the flames, and Brandon, as he looked on, amused himself with the thought that the wind was like the world of man, which, when any one is first struggling, has a tendency to crush him, but when he has once gained a foothold exerts all its efforts to help him along. In this mood, half cynical, half imaginative, he watched the progress of the flames.

Soon all the fine kindling had crumbled away at the touch of the fire, and communicating its own heat to the wood around, it sank down, a glowing mass, the foundation of the rising fires.

Here, from this central heart of fire, the flames rushed on upon the wood which lay loosely on all sides, filling the hull. Through that wood the dry hot wind had streamed for many weeks, till every stave and every board had become dry to its utmost possibility. Now at the first breath of the flame the wood yielded; at the first touch it flared up, and prepared to receive the embrace of the fire in every fibre of its being.

The flame rolled on. It threw its long arms through the million interstices of the loose piles of wood, it penetrated every where with its subtle, far-reaching power, till within the ship the glow broadened and widened, the central heart of fire enlarged its borders, and the floods of flame that flowed from it rushed with consuming fury through the whole body of the ship.

Glowing with bright lustre, increasing in that brightness every moment, leaping up as it consumed and flashing vividly as it leaped up. A thousand tongues of flame streamed upward through the crannies of the gaping deck, and between the wide orifices of the planks and timbers the dazzling flames gleamed; a thousand resistless arms seemed extended forward to grasp the fabric now completely at its mercy, and the hot breath of the fire shriveled up all in its path before yet its hands were laid upon it.

And fast and furious, with eager advance, the flames rushed on devouring every thing. Through the hatchway, around which the fiercest fires gathered, the stream of flame rose impetuously on high, in a straight upward torrent, hurling up a vast pyramid of fire to the ebon skies, a φλογὸς *μέγαν πώγωνα* which, like that which once illumed the Slavonic strait with the signal-fire first caught from burning Troy, here threw its radiance far over the deep.

While the lighter wood lasted the flame was in the ascendant, and nobly it did its work. Whatever could be done by bright radiance and far-penetrating lustre was done here. If that ship which had passed held any men on board capable of feeling a human interest in the visible signs of calamity at sea, they would be able to read in this flame that there was disaster somewhere upon these waters, and if they had human hearts they would turn to see if there was not some suffering which they might relieve.

But the lighter and the dryer wood was at last consumed, and now there remained that which Brandon had never touched, the dense masses which still lay piled where they had been placed eighteen years before. Upon these the fire now marched. But already the long days and weeks of scorching sun and fierce wind had not been without their effects, and the dampness had been subdued. Besides, the fire that advanced upon them had already gained immense advantage; for one half of the brig was one glowing mass of heat, which sent forth its consuming forces, and withered up, and blighted, and annihilated all around. The close-bound and close-packed masses of staves and boards received the resistless embrace of the fire, and where they did not flame they still gave forth none the less a blazeless glow.

Now from the burning vessel the flame arose no more; but in its place there appeared that which sent forth as vivid a gleam, and as far-flashing a light. The fire had full sway, though it gave forth no blaze, and, while it gleamed but little, still it devoured. From the sides of the ship the planks, blasted by the intense heat and by the outburst of the flames, had sprung away and now for nearly all the length of the vessel the timbers were exposed without any covering. Between these flashed forth the gleam of the fire inside, which now in one pure mass glowed with dazzling brightness and intense heat.

But the wood inside, damp as it was, and solid in its fibre, did not allow a very swift progress to the fire. It burned, but it burned slowly. It glowed like the charcoal of a furnace from behind its wooden bars.

The massive timbers of mahogany wood yielded slowly and stubbornly to the conflagration. They stood up like iron bars long after all the interior was one glowing mass. But, though they yielded slowly, still they had to yield with the passage of hours to the progress of the fire. And so it came to pass that at length the strong sides, sapped by the steady and resistless assault, surrendered. One by one the stout timbers, now wasted and weakened, gave way and sank down into the fervid mass beneath. At last the whole centre was one accumulation of glowing ashes, and all that remained were the bow, covered with sand, and the stern, with the quarter-deck.

The fire spread in both directions. The stern

yielded first. Here the strong deck sustained for a time the onset of the fire that had consumed every thing beneath, but at last it sunk in; the timbers of the sides followed next, and all had gone. With the bow there was a longer and a harder struggle. The fire had penetrated far into that part of the vessel; the flames smouldered there, but the conflagration went on, and smoke and blue flames issued from every part of that sandy mound, which, fiercely assailed by the heat, gave way in every direction, broke into a million crevices, and in places melted and ran together in a glowing molten heap. Here the fires burned longest, and here they lived and gleamed until morning.

Long before morning Brandon had fallen asleep. He had stood first near the burning wreck. Then the heat forced him to move away, and he had gone to a ridge of sand, where this peninsula joined the island. There he sat down, watching the conflagration for a long time. There the light flashed, and if that ship for whom he was signaling had noticed this sign, and had examined the island, his figure could be seen to any one that chose to examine.

But hours passed on. He strained his eyes through the gloom in the direction in which the ship had vanished to see if there were any sign there. None appeared. The progress of the fire was slow. It went on burning and glowing with wonderful energy all through the night, till at last, not long before dawn, the stern fell in, and nothing now was left but the sand-mound that covered the bows, which, burning beneath, gave forth smoke and fire.

Then, exhausted by fatigue, he sank down on the sand and fell into a sound sleep.

In the midst of thronging dreams, from the depths of that imaginary land where his weary spirit wandered in sleep, he was suddenly roused. A hand was laid on his shoulder, which shook him roughly, and a hoarse voice shouted in his ear, "Mess-mate! Halloo, mess-mate! Wake up!"

Brandon started up and gazed with wild, astonished eyes around. It was day. The sun was two or three hours above the horizon. He was surrounded by half a dozen seamen, who were regarding him with wondering but kindly faces. The one who spoke appeared to be their leader. He held a spy-glass in his hand. He was a sturdy, thick-set man of about fifty, whose grizzled hair, weather-beaten face, groggy nose, and whiskers, coming all round under his chin, gave him the air of old Benbow as he appears on the stage—"a reg'lar old salt," "sea-dog," or whatever other name the popular taste loves to apply to the British tar.

"Hard luck here, mess-mate," said this man, with a smile. "But you're all right now. Come! Cheer up! Won't you take a drink?" And he held out a brandy-flask.

Brandon rose mechanically in a kind of maze, not yet understanding his good fortune, not yet knowing whether he was alive or dead. He took the flask and raised it to his lips. The inspiriting draught gave him new life. He looked earnestly at the Captain as he handed it back, and then seized both his hands.

"God Almighty bless you for this, noble friend, whoever you are! But how and when did you get here? Who are you? Did you not see my signal on the rock yesterday—?"

"One question at a time, mess-mate," said the other, laughingly. "I'm Captain Corbet, of the ship *Falcon*, bound from Sydney to London, and these are some of my men. We saw this light last night about midnight, right on our weather-bow, and came up to see what it was. We found shoal water, and kept off till morning. There's the *Falcon*, Sir."

The Captain waved his hand proudly to where a large, handsome ship lay, about seven miles away to the south.

"On your bow? Did you see the fire *ahead* of you?" asked Brandon, who now began to comprehend the situation.

"Yes."

"Then you didn't pass me toward the north yesterday?"

"No; never was near this place before this morning."

"It must have been some other ship, then," said Brandon, musingly.

"But how did you get here, and how long have you been here?"

Brandon had long since decided on the part he was to play. His story was all ready:

"My name is Edward Wheeler. I came out supercargo in the brig *Argo*, with a cargo of hogshead staves and box shooks from London to Manilla. On the 16th of September last we encountered a tremendous storm and struck on this sand-bank. It is not down on any of the charts. The vessel stuck hard and fast, and the sea made a clean breach over us. The captain and crew put out the boat, and tried to get away, but were swamped and drowned. I staid by the wreck till morning. The vessel stood the storm well, for she had a solid cargo, was strongly built, and the sand formed rapidly all about her. The storm lasted for several days, and by the end of that time a shoal had formed. Several storms have occurred since, and have heaped the sand all over her. I have lived here ever since in great misery. Yesterday a vessel passed, and I put up a signal on the rock over there, which she did not notice. In despair I set fire to the brig, which was loaded with wood and burned easily. I watched till morning, and then fell asleep. You found me so. That's all I have to say."

On hearing this story nothing could exceed the kindness and sympathy of these honest-hearted seamen. The Captain insisted on his taking another drink, apologised for having to carry him back to England, and finally hurried him off to the boat. Before two hours Brandon stood on the deck of the *Falcon*.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MALAY PIRATE.

Two days had passed since Brandon's rescue. The light wind which had brought up the *Falcon* soon died out, and before the island had been left far behind a calm succeeded, and there was nothing left but to drift.

A calm in other seas is stillness, here on the Indian Ocean it is stagnation. The calmness is like Egyptian darkness. It may be felt. The stagnation of the waters seems deep enough to destroy all life there. The air is thick, oppressive, feverish; there is not a breath or a murmur

of wind; even the swell of ocean, which is never-ending, here approaches as near as possible to an end. The ocean rolled but slightly, but the light undulations gave a lazy, listless motion to the ship, the spars creaked monotonously, and the great sails flapped idly in the air.

At such a time the calm itself is sufficiently dreary, but now there was something which made all things still more drear. For the calm was attended by a thick fog; not a moist, drizzling fog like those of the North Atlantic, but a sultry, dense, dry fog; a fog which gave greater emphasis to the heat, and, instead of alleviating it, made it more oppressive.

It was so thick that it was not possible while standing at the wheel to see the forecastle. Aloft, all the heavens were hidden in a canopy of sickly gray; beneath, the sea showed the same color. Its glassy surface exhibited not a ripple. A small space only surrounded the vessel, and beyond all things were lost to view.

The sailors were scattered about the ship in groups. Some had ascended to the tops with a faint hope of finding more air; some were lying flat on their faces on the forecastle; others had sought those places which were under the sails where the occasional flap of the broad canvas sent down a slight current of air.

The Captain was standing on the quarter-deck, while Brandon was seated on a stool near the wheel. He had been treated by the Captain with unbounded hospitality, and supplied with every thing that he could wish.

"The fact is," said the Captain, who had been conversing with Brandon, "I don't like calms any where, still less calms with fogs, and least of all, calms off these infernal islands."

"Why?"

"Because to the north'ard is the Strait of Sunda, and the Malay pirates are always cruising about, often as far as this. Did you ever happen to hear of Zangorri?"

"Yes."

"Well, all I can say is, if you hadn't been wrecked, you'd have probably had your throat cut by that devil."

"Can't any body catch him?"

"They don't catch him at any rate. Whether they can or not is another question."

"Have you arms?"

"Yes. I've got enough to give Zangorri a pleasanter reception than he usually gets from a merchant-ship; and my lads are the boys that can use them."

"I wonder what has become of that other ship that passed me on the island," said Brandon, after a pause.

"She can't be very far away from us," replied the Captain, "and we may come up with her before we get to the Cape."

A silence followed. Suddenly the Captain's attention was arrested by something. He raised his hand to his ear and listened very attentively. "Do you hear that?" he asked, quickly.

Brandon arose and walked to where the Captain was. Then both listened. And over the sea there came unmistakable sounds. The regular movement of oars! Oars out on the Indian Ocean! Yet the sound was unmistakable.

"It must be some poor devils that have escaped from shipwreck," said the Captain, half to himself.

"Well, fire a gun."

"No," said the Captain, cautiously, after a pause. "It may be somebody else. Wait a bit."

So they waited a little while. Suddenly there came a cry of human voices—a volley of guns! Shrieks, yells of defiance, shouts of triumph, howls of rage or of pain, all softened by the distance, and all in their unison sounding appallingly as they were borne through the gloom of the fog.

Instantly every man in the ship bounded to his feet. They had not heard the first sounds, but these they heard, and in that superstition which is natural to the sailor, each man's first thought was that the noises came from the sky, and so each looked with a stupefied countenance at his neighbor.

But the Captain did not share the common feeling. "I knew it!" he cried. "I expected it, and blow my old eyes out if I don't catch 'em this time!"

"What?" cried Brandon.

But the Captain did not hear. Instantly his whole demeanor was changed. He sprang to the companion-way. He spoke but one word, not in a loud voice, but in tones so stern, so startling, that every man in the ship heard the word:

"Zangorri!"

All knew what it meant. It meant that the most blood-thirsty pirate of these Eastern seas was attacking some ship behind that veil of fog.

And what ship? This was the thought that came to Brandon. Could it by any possibility be the one which passed by him when he strove so earnestly to gain her attention!

"Out with the long-boat! Load the carronade! Man the boat! Hurry up, lads, for God's sake!" And the Captain dashed down into the cabin. In an instant he was back again, buckling on a belt with a couple of pistols in it, and calling to his men, "Don't shout, don't cheer, but hurry, for God's sake!"

And the men rushed about, some collecting arms, others laboring at the boat. The *Falcon* was well supplied with arms, as the Captain had said. Three guns, any quantity of smaller arms, and a long Tom, formed her armament, while the long-boat had a carronade in her bows. Thanks to the snug and orderly arrangement of the ship, every thing was soon ready. The long-boat was out and afloat. All the seamen except four were on board, and the Captain went down last.

"Now, pull away, lads!" he cried; "no talking," and he took the tiller ropes. As he seated himself he looked toward the bows, and his eyes encountered the calm face of Brandon.

"What! you here?" he cried, with unmistakable delight.

Brandon's reply consisted simply in drawing a revolver from his pocket.

"You're a brick!" said the Captain.

Not another word was spoken. The Captain steered the boat toward the direction from which the sounds came. These grew louder every moment—more menacing, and more terrible.

The sailors put all their strength to the oars, and drove the great boat through the water. To their impatience it seemed as though they would never get there. Yet the place which they desired

so much to reach was not far away; the sounds were now very near; and at length, as they drove onward, the tall sides of a ship burst on their sight through the gloom. By its side was a boat of the kind that is used by the Malays. On board the ship a large number of savage figures were rushing about in mad ferocity.

In a moment the boat was seen. A shout rose from the Malays. A score of them clambered swiftly down the ship's side to their boat, and a panic seemed to seize all the rest, who stood looking around irresolutely for some way of escape.

The boatswain was in the bows of the long-boat, and as the Malays crowded into their craft he took aim with the carronade, and fired. The explosion thundered through the air. A terrific shriek followed. The next instant the Malay boat, filled with writhing dusky figures, went down beneath the waters.

The long-boat immediately after touched the side of the ship. Brandon grasped a rope with his left hand, and, holding his revolver in his right, leaped upward. A Malay with uplifted knife struck at him. Bang! went the revolver, and the Malay fell dead. The next instant Brandon was on board, followed by all the sailors, who sprang upward and clambered into the vessel before the Malays could rally from the first shock of surprise.

But the panic was arrested by a man who bounded upon deck through the hatchway. Roused by the noise of the gun, he had hurried up, and reached the deck just as the sailors arrived. In fierce, stern words he shouted to his men, and the Malays gathered new courage from his words. There were about fifty of these, and not more than thirty English sailors; but the former had carelessly dropped their arms about, and most of their pieces were unloaded; the latter, therefore, had it all their own way.

The first thing that they did was to pour a volley into the crowd of Malays, as they stood trying to face their new enemy. The next moment the sailors rushed upon them, some with cutlasses, some with pistols, and some with clubbed muskets.

The Malays resisted desperately. Some fought with their creeses, others snatched up muskets, and used them vigorously, others, unarmed, flung themselves upon their assailants, biting and tearing like wild beasts.

In the midst of the scene stood the chief, wielding a clubbed musket. He was a man of short stature, broad chest, and great muscular power. Three or four of the sailors had already been knocked down beneath his blows.

"Down with him!" yelled the Captain. "It's Zangorri!"

A venomous smile passed over the dark face of the Malay. Then he shouted to his men, and in an instant they rushed to the quarter-deck and took up a position there. A few of them obtained some more muskets that lay about.

The Captain shouted to his men, who were pursuing the Malays, to load once more. They did so, poured in a volley, and then rushed to the quarter-deck. Now a fiercer fight took place. The Captain with his pistol shot one man dead; the next instant he was knocked down. The boatswain was grappled by two powerful men. The rest of the sailors were driving all before them.

Meanwhile Brandon had been in the very centre of the fight. With his revolver in his left hand he held a cutlass in his right, and every blow that he gave told. He had sought all through the struggle to reach the spot where Zangorri stood, but had hitherto been unsuccessful. At the retreat which the Malays made he hastily loaded three of the chambers of his revolver which he had emptied into the hearts of three Malays, and sprang upon the quarter-deck first. The man who struck down the Captain fell dead from Brandon's pistol, just as he stooped to plunge his knife into the heart of the prostrate man. Another shot sent over one of the boatswain's assailants, and the other assailant was kicked up into the air and overboard by the boatswain himself.

After this Brandon had no more trouble to get at Zangorri, for the Malay chief with a howl of fury called on his men, and sprang at him. Two quick flashes, two sharp reports, and down went two of them. Zangorri grasped Brandon's hand, and raised his knife; the next instant Brandon had shifted his pistol to his other hand; he fired, Zangorri's arm fell by his side, broken, and the knife rang on the ship's deck.

Brandon bounded at his throat. He wound his arms around him, and with a tremendous jerk hurled Zangorri to the deck, and held him there.

A cry of terror and dismay arose from the Malays as they saw their chief fall. The sailors shouted; there was no further fighting; some of the pirates were killed, others leaped overboard and tried to swim away. The sailors, in their fury, shot at these wretches as they swam. The cruelty of Zangorri had stimulated such a thirst for vengeance that none thought of giving quarter. Out of all the Malays the only one alive was Zangorri himself, who now lay gasping, with a mighty hand on his throat.

At last, as his struggles grew feebler, Brandon relaxed his grasp. Some of the sailors came up with uplifted knives to put an end to Zangorri.

"Back!" cried Brandon, fiercely. "Don't touch him. He's mine!"

"He must die."

"That's for me to say," cried Brandon in a stern voice that forbade reply. In fact, the sailors seemed to feel that he had the best claim here, since he had not only captured Zangorri with his own hands, but had borne the chief share in the fight.

"Englishman," said a voice, "I thank you."

Brandon started.

It was Zangorri who had spoken; and in very fair English too.

"Do you speak English?" was all that he could say in his surprise.

"I ought to. I've seen enough of them," growled the other.

"[illegible] scoundrel!" cried Brandon, "you have [illegible] to thank me for. You must die a worse death."

"Ah," sneered Zangorri. "Well. It's about time. But my death will not pay for the hundreds of English lives that I have taken. I thank you, though, for you will give me time yet to tell the Englishmen how I hate them."

And the expression of hate that gleamed from the eyes of the Malay was appalling.

"Why do you hate them?" asked Brandon, whose curiosity was excited.

"My brother's blood was shed by them, and a Malay never forgives. Yet I have never found the man I sought. If I had found him I would not have killed any more."

"The man—what man?"

"The one whom I have sought for fifteen years through all these seas," said the other, hoarsely.

"What is his name?"

"I will not speak it. I had it carved on my creese which hangs around my neck."

Brandon thrust his hand into the bosom of the Malay where he saw a cord which passed around his neck. He drew forth a creese, and holding it up saw this name cut upon the handle: "JOHN POTTS."

The change that came over the severe, impassive face of Brandon was so extraordinary that even Zangorri in his pain and fury saw it. He uttered an exclamation. The brow of Brandon grew as black as night, his nostrils quivered, his eyes seemed to blaze with a terrific lustre, and a slight foam spread itself over his quivering lips. But he commanded himself by a violent effort.

He looked all around. The sailors were busy with the Captain, who still lay senseless. No one observed him. He turned to Zangorri.

"This shall be mine," said he, and he threw the cord around his own neck, and put the creese under his waistcoat. But the sharp eye of the Malay had been watching him, and as he raised his arm carelessly to put the weapon where he desired, he thoughtlessly loosed his hold. That instant Zangorri took advantage of it. By a tremendous effort he disengaged himself and bounded to his feet. The next instant he was at the taffrail. One hasty glance all around showed him all that he wished to see. Another moment and he was beneath the water.

Brandon had been taken unawares, and the Malay was in the water before he could think. But he drew his revolver, in which there yet remained two shots, and, stepping to the taffrail, watched for Zangorri to reappear.

During the fight a change had come over the scene. The fog had begun to be dissipated and a wider horizon appeared. As Brandon looked he saw two vessels upon the smooth surface of the sea. One was the *Falcon*. The other was a large Malay proa. On the decks of this last was a crowd of men, perhaps about fifty in number, who stood looking toward the ship where the fight had been. The sweeps were out, and they were preparing to move away. But the escape of Zangorri had aroused them, and they were evidently waiting to see the result. That result lay altogether at the disposal of the man with the revolver, who stood at the stern from which Zangorri had leaped.

And now Zangorri's head appeared above the waves, while he took a long breath ere he plunged again. The revolver covered him. In a moment a bullet could have plunged into his brain.

But Brandon did not fire. He could not. It was too cold-blooded. True, Zangorri was stained with countless crimes; but all his crimes at that moment were forgotten: he did not appear as Zangorri the merciless pirate, but simply as a wounded wretch, trying to escape from death. That death Brandon could not deal him.

The sailors were still intent upon the Captain, whose state was critical, and Brandon alone watched the Malay. Soon he saw those on board the proa send down a boat and row quickly toward him. They reached him, dragged him on board, and then rowed back.

Brandon turned away. As yet no one had been in the cabin. He hurried thither to see if perchance any one was there who might be saved.

He entered the cabin. The first look which he gave disclosed a sight which was enough to chill the blood of the stoutest heart that ever beat.

All around the cabin lay human bodies distorted by the agonies of death, twisted and twined in different attitudes, and still lying in the position in which death had found them.

One, whose appearance showed him to be the captain, lay grasping the hair of a Malay, with his sword through his enemy's heart, while a knife still remained buried in his own. Another lay with his head cut open; another with his face torn by the explosion of a gun. There were four whites here and about ten Malays, all dead. But the fourth white was a woman, who lay dead in front of a door that led to an inner cabin, and which was now closed. The woman appeared to be about fifty years of age, her venerable gray hair was stained with blood, and her hand clutched the arm of a Malay who lay dead by her side.

While Brandon stood looking at this sight he became aware of a movement in a corner of the cabin where there were five or six bodies heaped together. He hurried over to the place, and, pulling away the bodies of several Malays, found at length a Hindu of large stature, in whom life was by no means extinct, for he was pushing with hands and feet and making faint efforts to rise. He had been wounded in many places, and was now quite unconscious.

Brandon dragged away all the bodies, laid him in as easy a posture as possible, and then rushed up to the deck for some water. Returning he dashed it over the Hindu, and bound up one or two wounds which seemed most dangerous.

His care soon brought the Hindu to consciousness.

The man opened his eyes, looked upon Brandon first with astonishment, then with speechless gratitude, and clasping his hand moaned faintly, in broken English,

"Bless de Lor! Sahib!"

Brandon hurried up on deck and calling some of the sailors had the Hindu conveyed there. All crowded around him to ask him questions, and gradually found out about the attack of the pirates. The ship had been becalmed the day before, and the Malay proa was in sight, evidently with evil intentions. They had kept a good watch, and when the fog came had some hope of escape. But the Malay boats had sought them through the fog, and had found them. They had resisted well, but were overpowered by numbers. The Hindu had been cook of the ship, and had fought till the last by the side of his captain.

Without waiting to hear the Hindu's story Brandon went back to the cabin. The door that opened into the inner cabin was shut. He tried it. It was locked. He looked into the keyhole. It was locked from the inside.

"SHE

"Is any one th
A cry of surpri
"You are saf
cried Brandon.
Then came the
key was turned, t
appeared before th
a young girl, who,
flung herself on he
tude and raised he
uttered inaudible
She was quite
slender frame, and
Her complexion w
eyes were large, d
fell in rich masses
hand she held a kn
death-like tenacity.
"Poor child!" m
of tenderest comm
that you could do
She looked up at
at the keen glitterir
of accent which sh
earnest, murmured,
"It could at leas
Brandon smiled

"SHE FLUNG HERSELF ON HER KNEES IN A TRANSPORT OF GRATITUDE."

"Is any one there?" he asked.

A cry of surprise was the sole answer.

"You are safe. We are friends. Open!" cried Brandon.

Then came the sound of light footsteps, the key was turned, the door slided back, and there appeared before the astonished eyes of Brandon a young girl, who, the moment that she saw him, flung herself on her knees in a transport of gratitude and raised her face to Heaven, while her lips uttered inaudible words of thanksgiving.

She was quite a young girl, with a delicate, slender frame, and features of extreme loveliness. Her complexion was singularly colorless. Her eyes were large, dark, and luminous. Her hair fell in rich masses over her shoulders. In one hand she held a knife, to which she clung with a death-like tenacity.

"Poor child!" murmured Brandon, in accents of tenderest commiseration. "It is but little that you could do with that knife."

She looked up at him as she knelt, then looked at the keen glittering steel, and, with a solemnity of accent which showed how deeply she was in earnest, murmured, half to herself,

"It could at least have saved me!"

Brandon smiled upon her with such a smile as a father might give at seeing the spirit or prowess of some idolized son.

"There is no need," he said, with a voice of deep feeling, "there is no need of that now. You are saved. You are avenged. Come with me." The girl rose. "But wait," said Brandon, and he looked at her earnestly and most pityingly. "There are things here which you should not see. Will you shut your eyes and let me lead you?"

"I can bear it," said the girl. "I will not shut my eyes."

"You must," said Brandon, firmly, but still pityingly, for he thought of that venerable woman who lay in blood outside the door. The girl looked at him and seemed at first as though about to refuse. There was something in his face so full of compassion, and entreaty, and calm control, that she consented. She closed her eyes and held out her hand. Brandon took it and led her through the place of horror and up to the deck.

Her appearance was greeted with a cry of joy from all the sailors. The girl looked around. She saw the Malays lying dead upon the deck. She saw the ship that had rescued, and the proa that had terrified her. But she saw no familiar face.

She turned to Brandon with a face of horror, and with white lips asked:

"Where are they all?"

"Gone," said Brandon.

"What! All?" gasped the girl.

"All—except yourself and the cook."

She shuddered from head to foot; at last, coming closer to Brandon, she whispered: "And my nurse—?"

Brandon said nothing, but, with a face full of meaning, pointed upward. The girl understood him. She reeled, and would have fallen had not Brandon supported her. Then she covered her face with her hands, and, staggering away to a seat, sank down and wept bitterly.

All were silent. Even the rough sailors respected that grief. Rough! Who does not know that sailors are often the most tender-hearted of men, and always the most impulsive, and most quick to sympathy?

So now they said nothing, but stood in groups sorrowing in her sorrow. The Captain, meanwhile, had revived, and was already on his feet looking around upon the scene. The Hindu also had gained strength with every throb of his heart and every breath of the air.

But suddenly a cry arose from one of the men who stood nearest the hatchway.

"The ship is sinking!"

Every one started. Yes, the ship was sinking. No one had noticed it; but the water was already within a few feet of the top. No doubt Zangorri had been scuttling her when he rushed out of the hold at the noise of the attack.

There was nothing left but to hasten away. There was time to save nothing. The bodies of the dead had to be left with the ship for their tomb. In a short time they had all hurried into the boat and were pulling away. But not too soon. For scarcely had they pulled away half a dozen boat-lengths from the ship than the water, which had been rising higher and higher, more rapidly every moment, rushed madly with a final onset to secure its prey; and with a groan like that of some living thing the ship went down.

A yell came from over the water. It rose from the Malay proa, which was moving away as fast as the long sweeps could carry her. But the dead were not revenged only. They were remembered. Not long after reaching the *Falcon* the sailors were summoned to the side which looked toward the spot where the ship had sunk, and the solemn voice of Brandon read the burial-service of the Church.

And as he read that service he understood the [illegible] which he had escaped when the ship passed [illegible] and without noticing his signal.

CHAPTER X.

BEATRICE.

It was natural that a young girl who had gone through so fearful an ordeal should for some time feel its effects. Her situation excited the warmest sympathy of all on board the ship; and her appearance was such as might inspire a chivalrous respect in the hearts of those rough but kindly and sensitive sailors who had taken part in her rescue.

Her whole appearance marked her as one of no common order. There was about her an air of aristocratic grace which inspired involuntary respect; an elegance of manner and complete self-possession which marked perfect breeding. Added to this, her face had something which is greater even than beauty—or at least something without which beauty itself is feeble—namely, character and expression. Her soul spoke out in every lineament of her noble features, and threw around her the charm of spiritual exaltation.

To such a charm as this Brandon did not seem indifferent. His usual self-abstraction seemed to desert him for a time. The part that he had taken in her rescue of itself formed a tie between them; but there was another bond in the fact that he alone of all on board could associate with her on equal terms, as a high-bred gentleman with a high-bred lady.

The Hindu had at once found occupation, for Brandon, who had seen the stuff that was in him, offered to take him for his servant. He said that his name was Assgeelo, but he was commonly called Cato, and preferred that name to any other. He regarded Brandon as his saviour, with all the superstition which Hindus can feel, and looked up to this saviour as a superior being. The offer of employment was eagerly accepted, and Cato at once entered upon the few duties which his situation could require on ship-board.

Meanwhile the young lady remained unknown. At first she spent the greater part of her time in her room, and only came out at meal-times, when the sadness of her face prevented any thing except the most distant and respectful courtesy. No one knew her name, and no one asked it. Cato was ignorant of it. She and the old nurse had only been known to him as the young missis and the old missis.

Brandon, roused from his indifference, did all in his power to mitigate the gloom of this fair young creature, whom fate had thrown in his way. He found that his attentions were not unacceptable. At length she came out more frequently, and they became companions on the quarter-deck.

Brandon was touched by the exhibition which she had made of her gratitude to himself. She persisted in regarding him alone as the one to whom she owed her life, and apologized to him for her selfishness in giving way so greatly to her grief. After a time she ventured to tell him the story of the voyage which she had been making. She was on her way from China to England. Her father lived in England, but she had passed her life in Hong-Kong, having been brought up there by the old nurse, who had accompanied her on her voyage until that fearful calamity.

She told him at different times that her father was a merchant who had business all over the world, and that he had of late taken up his station in his own home and sent for her.

Of her father she did not say much, and did not seem to know much. She had never seen him. She had been in Hong-Kong ever since she could remember. She believed, however, that she was born in England, but did not know for certain. Her nurse had not known her till she had gone to China.

It was certainly a curious life, but quite natural, when a busy merchant devotes all his

thoughts to business, and but little attention to his family. She had no mother, but thought she must have died in India. Yet she was not sure. Of all this, however, she expected to hear when she reached home and met her father.

By the time that she had been a month on board Brandon knew much of the events of her simple life. He saw the strange mixture of fear and longing with which she looked forward to a meeting with her father. He learned that she had a brother, also, whom she had never seen, for her father kept his son with himself. He could not help looking with inexpressible pity on one so lovely, yet so neglected.

Otherwise, as far as mere money was concerned, she had never suffered. Her accomplishments were numerous. She was passionately fond of music, and was familiar with all the classic compositions. Her voice was finely trained, for she had enjoyed the advantage of the instructions of an Italian maestro, who had been banished, and had gone out to Hong-Kong as band-master in the Twentieth Regiment. She could speak French fluently, and had read almost every thing.

Now after finding out all this Brandon had not found out her name. Embarrassments arose sometimes, which she could not help noticing, from this very cause, and yet she said nothing about it. Brandon did not like to ask her abruptly, since he saw that she did not respond to his hints. So he conjectured and wondered. He thought that her name must be of the lordliest kind, and that she for some reason wished to keep it a secret; perhaps she was noble, and did not like to tell that name which had been stained by the occupations of trade. All this Brandon thought.

Yet as he thought this, he was not insensible to the music of her soft, low voice, the liquid tenderness of her eye, and the charm of her manner. She seemed at once to confide herself to him—to own the superiority of his nature, and seek shelter in it. Circumstances threw them exclusively into one another's way, and they found each other so congenial that they took advantage of circumstances to the utmost.

There were others as well as Brandon who found it awkward not to have any name by which to address her, and chief of these was the good Captain. After calling her Ma'am and Miss indifferently for about a month he at last determined to ask her directly; so, one day at the dinner-table, he said:

"I most humbly beg your pardon, ma'am; but I do not know your name, and have never had a chance to find it out. If it's no offense, perhaps you would be so good as to tell it?"

The young lady thus addressed flushed crimson, then looked at Brandon, who was gazing fixedly on his plate, and with visible embarrassment said, very softly, "Beatrice."

"B. A. Treachy," said the Captain. "Ah! I hope, Miss Treachy, you will pardon me; but I really found it so everlasting confusing."

A faint smile crossed the lips of Brandon. But Beatrice did not smile. She looked a little frightened, and then said:

"Oh, that is only my Christian name!"

"Christian name!" said the Captain. "How can that be a Christian name?"

"My surname is—" She hesitated, and then, with an effort, pronounced the word "Potts."

"'Potts!'" said the Captain, quickly, and with evident surprise. "Oh—well, I hope you will excuse me."

But the face of Beatrice turned to an ashen hue as she marked the effect which the mention of that name had produced on Brandon. He had been looking at his plate like one involved in thought. As he heard the name his head fell forward, and he caught at the table to steady himself. He then rose abruptly with a cloud upon his brow, his lips firmly pressed together, and his whole face seemingly transformed, and hurried from the cabin.

She did not see him again for a week. He pleaded illness, shut himself in his state-room, and was seen by no one but Cato.

Beatrice could not help associating this change in Brandon with the knowledge of her name. That name was hateful to herself. A fastidious taste had prevented her from volunteering to tell it; and as no one asked her directly it had not been known. And now, since she had told it, this was the result.

For Brandon's conduct she could imagine only one cause. He had felt shocked at such a plebeian name.

The fact that she herself hated her name, and saw keenly how ridiculously it sounded after such a name as Beatrice, only made her feel the more indignant with Brandon. "His own name," she thought, bitterly, "is plebeian—not so bad as mine, it is true, yet still it is plebeian. Why should he feel so shocked at mine?" Of course, she knew him only as "*Mr. Wheeler*." "Perhaps he has imagined that I had some grand name, and, learning my true one, has lost his illusion. He formerly esteemed me. He now despises me."

Beatrice was cut to the heart; but she was too proud to show any feeling whatever. She frequented the quarter-deck as before; though now she had no companion except, at turns, the good-natured Captain and the mate. The longer Brandon avoided her the more indignant she felt. Her outraged pride made sadness impossible.

Brandon remained in his state-room for about two weeks altogether. When at length he made his appearance on the quarter-deck he found Beatrice there, who greeted him with a distant bow.

There was a sadness in his face as he approached and took a seat near her which at once disarmed her, drove away all indignation, and aroused pity.

"You have been sick," she said, kindly, and with some emotion.

"Yes," said Brandon, in a low voice, "but now that I am able to go about again my first act is to apologize to you for my rudeness in quitting the table so abruptly as to make it seem like a personal insult to you. Now I hope you will believe me when I say that an insult to you from me is impossible. Something like a spasm passed over my nervous system, and I had to hurry to my room."

"I confess," said Beatrice, frankly, "that I thought your sudden departure had something to do with the conversation about me. I am very sorry indeed that I did you such a wrong; I

might have known you better. Will you forgive me?"

Brandon smiled, faintly. "You are the one who must forgive."

"But I hate my name so," burst out Beatrice.

Brandon said nothing.

"Don't you? Now confess."

"How can I—" he began.

"You do, you do!" she cried, vehemently; "but I don't care—for I hate it."

Brandon looked at her with a sad, weary smile, and said nothing. "You are sick," she said; "I am thoughtless. I see that my name, in some way or other, recalls painful thoughts. How wretched it is for me to give pain to others!"

Brandon looked at her appealingly, and said, "You give pain? Believe me! believe me! there is nothing but happiness where you are."

At this Beatrice looked confused and changed the conversation. There seemed after this to be a mutual understanding between the two to avoid the subject of her name, and although it was a constant mortification to Beatrice, yet she believed that on his part there was no contempt for the name, but something very different, something associated with better memories.

They now resumed their old walks and conversations. Every day bound them more closely to one another, and each took it for granted that the other would be the constant companion of every hour in the day.

Both had lived unusual lives. Beatrice had much to say about her Hong-Kong life, the Chinese, the British officers, and the festivities of garrison life. Brandon had lived for years in Australia, and was familiar with all the round of events which may be met with in that country. He had been born in England, and had lived there, as has already been mentioned, till he was almost a man, so that he had much to say about that mother-land concerning which Beatrice felt such curiosity. Thus they settled down again naturally and inevitably into constant association with each other.

Whatever may have been the thoughts of Brandon during the fortnight of his seclusion, or whatever may have been the conclusion to which he came, he carefully refrained from the most remote hint at the home or the prospects of Beatrice. He found her on the seas, and he was content to take her as she was. Her name was a common one. She might be connected with his enemy, or she might not. For his part, he did not wish to know.

Beatrice also showed equal care in avoiding the subject. The effect which had been produced by the mention of her name was still remembered, and, whatever the cause may have been, both this and her own strong dislike to it prevented her from ever making any allusion either to her father or to any one of her family. She had no scruples, however, about talking of her Hong-Kong life, in which one person seemed to have figured most prominently—a man who had lived there for years, and given her instruction in music. He was an Italian, of whom she knew nothing whatever but his name, with the exception of the fact that he had been unfortunate in Europe, and had come out to Hong-Kong as bandmaster of the Twentieth Regiment. His name was Paolo Langhetti.

"Do you like music?" asked Brandon, abruptly.

"Above all things," said Beatrice, with an intensity of emphasis which spoke of deep feeling.

"Do you play?"

"Somewhat."

"Do you sing?"

"A little. I was considered a good singer in Hong-Kong; but that is nothing. I sang in the Cathedral. Langhetti was kind enough to praise me; but then he was so fond of me that whatever I did was right."

Brandon was silent for a little while. "Langhetti was fond of you?" he repeated, interrogatively, and in a voice of singular sweetness.

"Very," returned Beatrice, musingly. "He always called me 'Bice'—sometimes 'Bicetta,' 'Bicinola,' 'Bicina;' it was his pretty Italian way. But oh, if you could hear him play! He could make the violin speak like a human voice. He used to think in music. He seemed to me to be hardly human sometimes."

"And he loved to hear you sing?" said Brandon, in the same voice.

"He used to praise me," said Beatrice, meekly. "His praise used to gratify, but it did not deceive me. I am not conceited, Mr. Wheeler."

"Would you sing for me?" asked Brandon, in accents almost of entreaty, looking at her with an imploring expression.

Beatrice's head fell. "Not now—not yet—not here," she murmured, with a motion of her hand. "Wait till we pass beyond this ocean. It seems haunted."

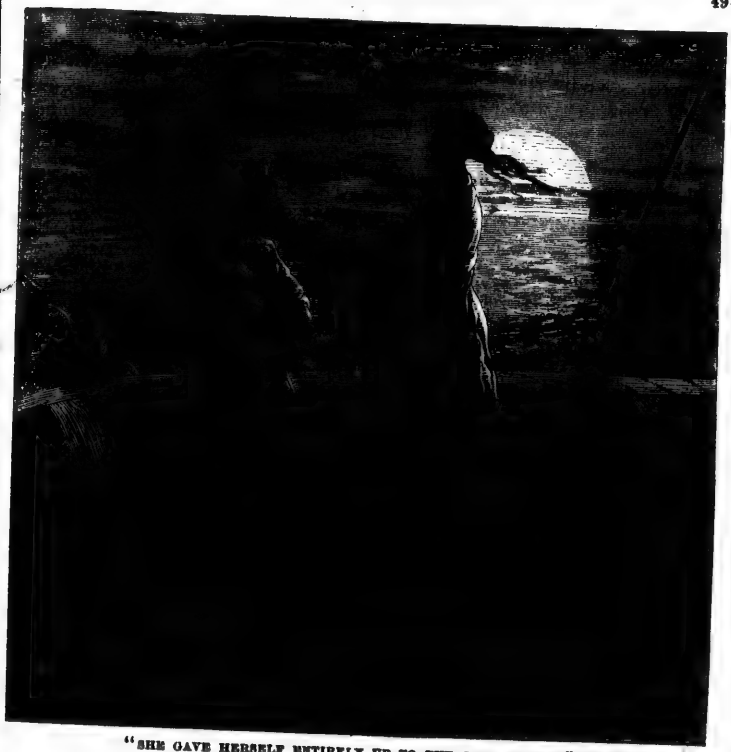
Brandon understood her tone and gesture.

But the weeks passed, and the months, and they went over the seas, touching at Mauritius, and afterward at Cape Town, till finally they entered the Atlantic Ocean, and sailed North. During all this time their association was close and continuous. In her presence Brandon softened; the sternness of his features relaxed, and the great purpose of his life grew gradually fainter.

One evening, after they had entered the Atlantic Ocean, they were standing by the stern of the ship looking at the waters, when Brandon repeated his request.

"Would you be willing to sing now?" he asked, gently, and in the same tone of entreaty which he had used before.

Beatrice looked at him for a moment without speaking. Then she raised her face and looked up at the sky, with a deep abstraction in her eyes, as though in thought. Her face, usually colorless, now, in the moonlight, looked like marble; her dark hair hung in peculiar folds over her brow—an arrangement which was antique in its style, and gave her the look of a statue of one of the Muses. Her straight, Grecian features, large eyes, thin lips, and well-rounded chin—all had the same classic air, and Brandon, as he looked at her, wondered if she knew how fair she was. She stood for a moment in silence, and then began. It was a marvelous and a memorable epoch in Brandon's life. The scene around added its inspiration to the voice of the singer. The ocean spread afar away before them till the verge of the horizon seemed to blend sea and sky together. Overhead the dim sky hung, dotted with innumerable stars, prominent among which, not far above the ho-



"SHE GAVE HERSELF ENTIRELY UP TO THE JOY OF SONG."

rizon, gleamed that glorious constellation, the Southern Cross. Beatrice, who hesitated for a moment as if to decide upon her song, at last caught her idea from this scene around her, and began one of the most magnificent of Italian compositions:

"I cieli immensi narrano
Del gread' Iddio la gloria."

Her first notes poured forth with a sweetness and fullness that arrested the attention of all on board the ship. It was the first time she had sung, as she afterward said, since Langhetti had left Hong-Kong, and she gave herself entirely up to the joy of song. Her voice, long silent, instead of having been injured by the sorrow through which she had passed, was pure, full, marvelous, and thrilling. A glow like some divine inspiration passed over the marble beauty of her classic features; her eyes themselves seemed to speak of all that glory of which she sang, as the sacred fire of genius flashed from them.

At those wonderful notes, so generous and so penetrating with their sublime meaning, all on board the ship looked and listened with amazement. The hands of the steersman held the wheel listlessly. Brandon's own soul was filled with the fullest effects. He stood watching her figure, with its inspired lineaments, and thought of the fabled prodigies of music spoken of in ancient story. He thought of Orpheus hushing all animated nature to calm by the magic of his song. At last all thoughts of his own left him, and nothing remained but that which the song of Beatrice swept over his spirit.

But Beatrice saw nothing and heard nothing except the scene before her, with its grand inspiration and her own utterance of its praise. Brandon's own soul was more and more overcome; the divine voice thrilled over his heart; he shuddered and uttered a low sigh of rapture.

"My God!" he exclaimed as she ended; "I never before heard any thing like this. I never dreamed of such a thing. Is there on earth another such a voice as yours? Will I ever again hear any thing like it? Your song is like a voice from those heavens of which you sing. It is a new revelation."

He poured forth these words with passionate impetuosity. Beatrice smiled.

"Langhetti used to praise me," she simply rejoined.

"You terrify me," said he.

"Why?" asked Beatrice, in wonder.

"Because your song works upon me like a

spell, and all my soul sinks away, and all my will is weakened to nothingness."

Beatrice looked at him with a mournful smile. "Then you have the true passion for music," she said, "if this be so. For my part it is the joy of my life, and I hope to give up all my life to it."

"Do you expect to see Langhetti when you reach England?" asked Brandon, abruptly.

"I hope so," said she, musingly.

CHAPTER XI.

THE IMPROVISATORE.

THE character of Beatrice unfolded more and more every day, and every new development excited the wonder of Brandon.

She said once that music was to her like the breath of life, and indeed it seemed to be; for now, since Brandon had witnessed her powers, he noticed how all her thoughts took a coloring from this. What most surprised him was her profound acquirements in the more difficult branches of the art. It was not merely the case of a great natural gift of voice. Her whole soul seemed imbued with those subtle influences which music can most of all bestow. Her whole life seemed to have been passed in one long intercourse with the greatest works of the greatest masters. All their works were perfectly well known to her. A marvelous memory enabled her to have their choicest productions at command; and Brandon, who in the early part of his life had received a careful musical education, knew enough about it to estimate rightly the full extent of the genius of his companion, and to be astonished thereat.

Her mind was also full of stories about the lives, acts, and words of the great masters. For her they formed the only world with which she cared to be acquainted, and the only heroes whom she had power to admire. All this flowed from one profound central feeling—namely, a deep and all-absorbing love of this most divine art. To her it was more than art. It was a new faculty to him who possessed it. It was the highest power of utterance—such utterance as belongs to the angels; such utterance as, when possessed by man, raises him almost to an equality with them.

Brandon found out every day some new power in her genius. Now her voice was unloosed from the bonds which she had placed upon it. She sang, she said, because it was better than talking. Words were weak—song was all expression. Nor was it enough for her to take the compositions of others. Those were infinitely better, she said, than any thing which she could produce; but each one must have his own native expression; and there were times when she had to sing from herself. To Brandon this seemed the most amazing of her powers. In Italy the power of improvisation is not uncommon, and Englishmen generally imagine that this is on account of some peculiar quality of the Italian language. This is not the case. One can improvise in any language; and Brandon found that Beatrice could do this with the English.

"It is not wonderful," said she, in answer to his expression of astonishment, "it is not even difficult. There is an art in doing this, but, when you once know it, you find no trouble. It is rhythmic prose in a series of lines. Each line must contain a thought. Langhetti found no difficulty in making rhyming lines, but rhymes are not necessary. This rhythmic prose is as poetic as any thing can be. All the hymns of the Greek Church are written on this principle. So are the Te Deum and the Gloria. So were all the ancient Jewish psalms. The Jews improvised. I suppose Deborah's song, and perhaps Miriam's, are of this order."

"And you think the art can be learned by every one?"

"No, not by every one. One must have a quick and vivid imagination, and natural fluency—but these are all. Genius makes all the difference between what is good and what is bad. Sometimes you have a song of Miriam that lives while the world lasts, sometimes a poor little song like one of mine."

"Sing to me about music," said Brandon, suddenly.

Beatrice immediately began an improvisation. But the music to which she sang was lofty and impressive, and the marvelous sweetness of her voice produced an indescribable effect. And again, as always when she sang, the fashion of her face was changed, and she became transfigured before his eyes. It was the same rhythmic prose of which she had been speaking, sung according to the mode in which the Gloria is chanted, and divided into bars of equal time.

Brandon, as always, yielded to the spell of her song. To him it was an incantation. Her own strains varied to express the changing sentiment, and at last, as the song ended, it seemed to die away in melodious melancholy, like the dying strain of the fabled swan.

"Sing on!" he exclaimed, fervently; "I would wish to stand and hear your voice forever."

A smile of ineffable sweetness came over her face. She looked at him, and said nothing. Brandon bowed his head, and stood in silence.

Thus ended many of their interviews. Slowly and steadily this young girl gained over him an ascendency which he felt hourly, and which was so strong that he did not even struggle against it. Her marvelous genius, so subtle, so delicate, yet so inventive and quick, amazed him. If he spoke of this, she attributed every thing to Langhetti. "Could you but see him," she would say, "I should seem like nothing!"

"Has he such a voice?"

"Oh! he has no voice at all. It is his soul," she would reply. "He speaks through the violin. But he taught me all that I know. He said my voice was God's gift. He had a strange theory that the language of heaven and of the angels was music, and that he who loved it best on earth made his life and his thoughts most heavenly."

"You must have been fond of such a man."

"Very," said Beatrice, with the utmost simplicity. "Oh, I loved him so dearly!"

But in this confession, so artlessly made, Brandon saw only a love that was filial or sisterly. "He was the first one," said Beatrice, "who showed me the true meaning of life. He exalted his art above all other arts, and always

maintained that it was the purest and best thing which the world possessed. This consoled him for exile, poverty, and sorrow of many kinds."

"Was he married?"

Beatrice looked at Brandon with a singular smile. "Married! Langhetti married! Pardon me; but the idea of Langhetti in domestic life is so ridiculous."

"Why? The greatest musicians have married."

Beatrice looked up to the sky with a strange, serene smile. "Langhetti has no passion out of art," she said. "As an artist he is all fire, and vehemence, and enthusiasm. He is aware of all human passions, but only as an artist. He has only one love, and that is music. This is his idol. He seems to me himself like a song. But all the raptures which poets and novelists apply to lovers are felt by him in his music. He wants nothing while he has this. He thinks the musician's life the highest life. He says those to whom the revelations of God were committed were musicians. As David and Isaiah received inspiration to the strains of the harp, so, he says, have Bach and Mozart, Handel and Haydn, Beethoven and Mendelssohn. And where, indeed," she continued, in a musing tone, half soliloquizing, "where, indeed, can man rise so near heaven as when he listens to the inspired strains of these lofty souls?"

"Langhetti," said Brandon, in a low voice, "does not understand love, or he would not put music in its place."

"Yes," said Beatrice. "We spoke once about that. He has his own ideas, which he expressed to me."

"What were they?"

"I will have to say them as he said them," said she. "For on this theme he had to express himself in music."

Brandon waited in rapt expectation. Beatrice began to sing:

"Fairest of all most fair,
Young Love, how comest thou
Unto the soul?
Still as the evening breeze
Over the starry wave—
The moonlit wave—

"The heart lies motionless;
So still, so sensitive;
Love fans the breeze.
Lo! at his lightest touch,
The myriad ripples rise,
And murmur on.

"And ripples rise to waves,
And waves to rolling seas,
Till, far and wide,
The endless billows roll,
In undulations long,
For evermore!"

Her voice died away into a scarce audible tone, which sank into Brandon's heart, lingering and dying about the last word, with touching and unutterable melancholy. It was like the lament of one who loved. It was like the cry of some yearning heart.

In a moment Beatrice looked at Brandon with a swift, bright smile. She had sung these words as an artist. For a moment Brandon had thought that she was expressing her own feelings. But the bright smile on her face contrasted so strongly with the melancholy of her voice that he saw this was not so.

"Thus," she said, "Langhetti sang about it; and I have never forgotten his words."

The thought came to Brandon, is it not truer than she thinks, that "she loves him very dearly?" as she said.

"You were born to be an artist," he said, at last.

Beatrice sighed lightly. "That's what I never can be, I am afraid," said she. "Yet I hope I may be able to gratify my love for it. Art," she continued, musingly, "is open to women as well as to men; and of all arts none are so much so as music. The interpretation of great masters is a blessing to the world. Langhetti used to say that these are the only ones of modern times that have received heavenly inspiration. They correspond to the Jewish prophets. He used to declare that the interpretation of each was of equal importance. To man is given the interpretation of the one, but to woman is given the interpretation of much of the other. Why is not my voice, if it is such as he said, and especially the feeling within me, a Divine call to go forth upon this mission of interpreting the inspired utterances of the great masters of modern days?

"You," she continued, "are a man, and you have a purpose." Brandon started, but she did not notice it. "You have a purpose in life," she repeated. "Your intercourse with me will hereafter be but an episode in the life that is before you. I am a girl, but I too may wish to have a purpose in life—suited to my powers; and if I am not able to work toward it I shall not be satisfied."

"How do you know that I have a purpose, as you call it?" asked Brandon, after a pause.

"By the expression of your face, and your whole manner when you are alone and subside into yourself," she replied, simply.

"And of what kind?" he continued.

"That I do not seek to know," she replied; "but I know that it must be deep and all-absorbing. It seems to me to be too stern for Love; you are not the man to devote yourself to Avarice; possibly it may be Ambition, yet somehow I do not think so."

"What do you think it is, then?" asked Brandon, in a voice which had died away, almost to a whisper.

She looked at him earnestly; she looked at him pityingly. She looked at him also with that sympathy which might be evinced by one's Guardian Angel, if that Being might by any chance become visible. She leaned toward him, and spoke low in a voice only audible to him:

"Something stronger than Love, and Avarice, and Ambition," said she. "There can be only one thing."

"What?"

"Vengeance!" she said, in a voice of inexpressible mournfulness.

Brandon looked at her wonderingly, not knowing how this young girl could have divined his thoughts. He long remained silent.

Beatrice folded her hands together, and looked pensively at the sea.

"You are a marvelous being," said Brandon, at length. "Can you tell me any more?"

"I might," said she, hesitatingly; "but I am afraid you will think me impertinent."

"No," said Brandon. "Tell me, for perhaps you are mistaken."

"You will not think me impertinent, then?

You will only think that I said so because you asked me?"

"I entreat you to believe that it is impossible for me to think otherwise of you than you yourself would wish."

"Shall I say it, then?"

"Yes."

Her voice again sank to a whisper.

"Your name is not Wheeler."

Brandon looked at her earnestly. "How did you learn that?"

"By nothing more than observation."

"What is my name?"

"Ah, that is beyond my power to know," said she with a smile. "I have only discovered what you are not. Now you will not think me a spy, will you?" she continued, in a pleading voice.

Brandon smiled on her mournfully as she stood looking at him with her dark eyes upraised.

"A spy!" he repeated. "To me it is the sweetest thought conceivable that you could take the trouble to notice me sufficiently." He checked himself suddenly, for Beatrice looked away, and her hands which had been folded together clutched each other nervously. "It is always flattering for a gentleman to be the object of a lady's notice," he concluded, in a light tone.

Beatrice smiled. "But where," he continued, "could you have gained that power of divination which you possess; you who have always lived a secluded life in so remote a place?"

"You did not think that one like me could come out of Hong-Kong, did you?" said she, laughingly.

"Well, I have seen much of the world; but I have not so much of this power as you have."

"You might have more if—if—" she hesitated. "Well," she continued, "they say, you know, that men act by reason, women by intuition."

"Have you any more intuitions?" asked Brandon, earnestly.

"Yes," said she, mournfully.

"Tell me some."

"They will not do to tell," said Beatrice, in the same mournful tone.

"Why not?"

"They are painful."

"Tell them at any rate."

"No."

"Hint at them."

Beatrice looked at him earnestly. Their eyes met. In hers there was a glance of anxious inquiry, as though her soul were putting forth a question by that look which was stronger than words. In his there was a glance of anxious expectancy, as though his soul were speaking unto hers, saying: "Tell all; let me know if you suspect that of which I am afraid to think."

"We have met with ships at sea," she resumed, in low, deliberate tones.

"Yes."

"Sometimes we have caught up with them, we have exchanged signals, we have sailed in sight of one another for hours or for days, holding intercourse all the while. At last a new morning has come, and we looked out over the sea, and the other ship has gone from sight. We have left it forever. Perhaps we have drifted away, perhaps a storm has parted us, the end is the same—separation for evermore."

She spoke mournfully, looking away, her voice insensibly took up a cadence, and the words seemed to fall of themselves into rhythmic pauses.

"I understand you," said Brandon, with a more profound mournfulness in his voice. "You speak like a Sibyl. I pray Heaven that your words may not be a prophecy."

Beatrice still looked at him, and in her eyes he read pity beyond words; and sorrow also as deep as that pity.

"Do you read my thoughts as I read yours?" asked Brandon, abruptly.

"Yes," she answered, mournfully.

He turned his face away.

"Did Langhetti teach you this also?" he asked, at last.

"He taught me many things," was the answer.

Day succeeded to day, and week to week. Still the ship went on holding steadily to her course northward, and every day drawing nearer and nearer her goal. Storms came—some moderate, some severe; but the ship escaped them all with no casualties, and with but little delay.

At last they passed the equator, and seemed to have entered the last stage of their journey.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

At length the ship came within the latitude of the Guinea coast.

For some days there had been alternate winds and calms, and the weather was so fitful and so fickle that no one could tell in one hour what would happen in the next. All this was at last terminated by a dead, dense, oppressive calm like those of the Indian Ocean, in which exertion was almost impossible and breathing difficult. The sky, however, instead of being clear and bright, as in former calms, was now overspread with menacing clouds; the sea looked black, and spread out before them on every side like an illimitable surface of polished ebony. There was something appalling in the depth and intensity of this calm with such accompaniments. All felt this influence. Although there was every temptation to inaction and sleep yet no one yielded to it. The men looked suspiciously and expectantly at every quarter of the heavens. The Captain said nothing, but cautiously had all his preparations made for a storm. Every half hour he anxiously consulted the barometer, and then cast uneasy glances at the sea and sky.

But the calm which had set in at midnight, and had become confirmed at dawn, extended itself through the long day. The ship drifted idly, keeping no course, her yards creaking lazily as she slowly rose and fell at the movement of the ocean-undulations. Hour after hour passed, and the day ended, and night came once more.

The Captain did not turn in that night. In anxious expectation he waited and watched on deck, while all around there was the very blackness of darkness. Brandon began to see from the Captain's manner that he expected something far more violent than any thing which the ship had yet encountered, but, thinking that his presence would be of no consequence, he retired at the usual hour.

The deep, dense calm continued until nearly

midnight. The watchers on deck still waited in the same anxious expectation, thinking that the night would bring on the change which they expected.

Almost half an hour before midnight a faint light was seen in the thick mass of clouds overhead—it was not lightning, but a whitish streak, as though produced by some movement in the clouds. All looked up in mute expectation.

Suddenly a faint puff of wind came from the west, blowing gently for a few moments, then stopping, and then coming on in a stronger blast. Afar off, at what seemed like an immeasurable distance, a low, dull roar arose, a heavy moaning sound, like the menace of the mighty Atlantic, which was now advancing in wrath upon them.

In the midst of this the whole scene burst forth into dazzling light at the flash of a vast mass of lightning, which seemed to blaze from every part of the heavens on every side simultaneously. It threw forth all things—ship, sea, and sky—into the dazzled eyes of the watchers. They saw the ebon sky, the black and lustrous sea, the motionless ship. They saw also, far off to the west, a long line of white which appeared to extend along the whole horizon.

But the scene darted out of sight instantly, and instantly there fell the volleying discharge of a tremendous peal of thunder, at whose reverberations the air and sea and ship all vibrated.

Now the sky lightened again, and suddenly, as the ship lay there, a vast ball of fire issued from the black clouds immediately overhead, descending like the lightning straight downward, till all at once it struck the main truck. With a roar louder than that of the recent thunder it exploded; vast sheets of fire flashed out into the air, and a stream of light passed down the entire mast, shattering it as a tree is shattered when the lightning strikes it. The whole ship was shaken to its centre. The deck all around the mast was shattered to splinters, and along its extent and around its base a burst of vivid flame started into light.

Wild confusion followed. At once all the sailors were ordered up, and began to extinguish the fires, and to cut away the shattered mast. The blows of the axes resounded through the ship. The rigging was severed; the mast, already shattered, needed but a few blows to loosen its last fibres.

But suddenly, and furiously, and irresistibly, it seemed as though the whole tempest which they had so long expected was at last let loose upon them. There was a low moan, and, while they were yet trying to get rid of the mast, a tremendous squall struck the ship. It yielded and turned far over to that awful blow. The men started back from their work. The next instant a flash of lightning came, and toward the west, close over them, rose a long, white wall of foam. It was the van-guard of the storm, seen shortly before from afar, which was now upon them, ready to fall on their devoted heads.

Not a word was spoken. No order came from the Captain. The men awaited some word. There came none. Then the waters, which thus rose up like a heap before them, struck the ship with all the accumulated fury of that resistless onset, and hurled their utmost weight upon her as she lay before them.

The ship, already reeling far over at the stroke of the storm, now, at this new onset, yielded utterly, and rolled far over on her beam-ends. The awful billows dashed over and over her, sweeping her in their fury from end to end. The men clung helplessly to whatever rigging lay nearest, seeking only in that first moment of dread to prevent themselves from being washed away, and waiting for some order from the Captain, and wondering while they waited.

At the first peal of thunder Brandon had started up. He had lain down in his clothes, in order to be prepared for any emergency. He called Cato. The Hindu was at hand. "Cato, keep close to me whatever happens, for you will be needed." "Yes, Sahib." He then hurried to Beatrice's room and knocked. It was opened at once. She came forth with her pale, serene face, and looked at him.

"I did not lie down," said she. "I knew that there would be something frightful. But I am not afraid. At any rate," she added, "I know I will not be deserted."

Brandon said nothing, but held out to her an India-rubber life-preserver. "What is this for?" "For you. I wish you to put it on. It may not be needed, but it is best to have it on." "And what will you do?" "I—oh! I can swim, you know. But you don't know how to fasten it. Will you allow me to do so?" She raised her arms. He passed the belt around her waist, encircling her almost in his arms while doing so, and his hand, which had boldly grasped the head of the "dweller in the wreck," now trembled as he fastened the belt around that delicate and slender waist.

But scarcely had this been completed when the squall struck the ship, and the waves followed till the vessel was thrown far over on her side; and Brandon seizing Beatrice in one arm, clung with the other to the edge of the skylight, and thus kept himself upright.

He rested now for a moment. "I must go on deck," he said. "I do not wish you to leave me," was her answer. Nothing more was said. Brandon at once lifted her with one arm as though she were a child and clambered along, grasping such fixtures as afforded any thing to which he could cling; and thus, with hands and feet, groped his way to the door of the cabin, which was on the windward side. There were two doors, and between them was a seat.

"This," said he, "is the safest place for you. Can you hold on for a short time? If I take you on deck you will be exposed to the waves."

"I will do whatever you say," she replied; and clinging to the arm of the almost perpendicular seat, she was able to sustain herself there amidst the tossing and swaying of the ship.

Brandon then clambered out on deck. The ship lay far over. The waves came leaping upon her in successive surges. All around the sea was glistening with phosphorescent lustre, and when at times the lightning flashed forth it lighted up the scene, and showed the ocean stirred up to fiercest commotion. It seemed as though cataracts of water were rushing over the doomed ship, which now lay helpless, and at the mercy of the billows. The force of the wind was tremendous, exceeding any thing that Brandon had ever witnessed before.

What most surprised him now was the inaction

of the ship's company. Why was not something being done? Where was the Captain?

He called out his name; there was no response. He called after the mate; there was no answer. Instantly he conjectured that in the first fierce onset of the storm both Captain and mate had been swept away. How many more of that gallant company of brave fellows had perished he knew not. The hour was a perilous and a critical one. He himself determined to take the lead.

Through the midst of the storm, with its tumult and its fury, there came a voice as full and clear as a trumpet-peal, which roused all the sailors, and inspired them once more with hope. "Cut away the masts!" The men obeyed, without caring who gave the order. It was the command which each man had been expecting, and which he knew was the thing that should be done. At once they sprang to their work. The main-mast had already been cut loose. Some went to the fore-mast, others to the mizzen. The vast waves rolled on; the sailors guarded as best they could against the rush of each wave, and then sprang in the intervals to their work. It was perilous in the highest degree, but each man felt that his own life and the lives of all the others depended upon the accomplishment of this work, and this nerved the arm of each to the task.

At last it was done. The last strand of rigging had been cut away. The ship, disencumbered, slowly righted, and at last rode upright.

But her situation was still dangerous. She lay in the trough of the sea, and the gigantic waves, as they rolled up, still beat upon her with all their concentrated energies. Helpless, and now altogether at the mercy of the waves, the only hope left those on board lay in the strength of the ship herself.

None of the officers were left. As the ship righted Brandon thought that some of them might make their appearance, but none came. The Captain, the mate, and the second mate, all had gone. Perhaps all of them, as they stood on the quarter-deck, had been swept away simultaneously. Nothing could now be done but to wait. Morning at last came to the anxious watchers. It brought no hope. Far and wide the sea raged with all its waves. The wind blew with undiminished and irresistible violence. The ship, still in the trough of the sea, heaved and plunged in the overwhelming waves, which howled madly around and leaped over her like wolves eager for their prey. The wind was too fierce to permit even an attempt to rig a jury-mast.

The ship was also deeply laden, and this contributed to her peril. Had her cargo been smaller she would have been more buoyant; but her full cargo, added to her dangerous position as she lay at the mercy of the waves, made all hope of escape dark indeed.

Another night succeeded. It was a night of equal horror. The men stood watching anxiously for some sign of abatement in the storm, but none came. Sea and sky frowned over them darkly, and all the powers which they controlled were let loose unrestrained.

Another day and night came and went. Had not the *Falcon* been a ship of unusual strength she would have yielded before this to the storm. As it was, she began to show signs of giving way to the tremendous hammering to which she had been exposed, and her heavy Australian cargo bore her down. On the morning of the third day Brandon saw that she was deeper in the water, and suspected a leak. He ordered the pumps to be sounded. It was as he feared. There were four feet of water in the hold.

The men went to work at the pumps and worked by relays. Amidst the rush of the waves over the ship it was difficult to work advantageously, but they toiled on. Still, in spite of their efforts, the leak seemed to have increased, for the water did not lessen. With their utmost exertion they could do little more than hold their own.

It was plain that this sort of thing could not last. Already three nights and three days of incessant toil and anxiety, in which no one had slept, had produced their natural effects. The men had become faint and weary. But the brave fellows never murmured; they did every thing which Brandon ordered, and worked uncomplainingly.

Thus, through the third day, they labored on, and into the fourth night. That night the storm seemed to have reached its climax, if, indeed, any climax could be found to a storm which at the very outset had burst upon them with such appalling suddenness and fury, and had sustained itself all along with such unremitting energy. But on that night it was worse for those on board, since the ship which had resisted so long began to exhibit signs of yielding, her planks and timbers so severely assailed began to give way, and through the gaping seams the ocean waters permeated, till the ocean, like some beleaguering army, failing in direct assault, began to succeed by opening secret mines to the very heart of the besieged ship.

On the morning of the fourth day all hands were exhausted from night-long work, and there were ten feet of water in the hold.

It now became evident that the ship was doomed. Brandon at once began to take measures for the safety of the men.

On that memorable day of the calm previous to the outbreak of the storm, the Captain had told Brandon that they were about five hundred miles to the westward of the coast of Senegambia. He could not form any idea of the distance which the ship had drifted during the progress of the storm, but justly considered that whatever progress she had made had been toward the land. Their prospects in that direction, if they could only reach it, were not hopeless. Sierra Leone and Liberia were there; and if they struck the coast any where about they might make their way to either of those places.

But the question was how to get there. There was only one way, and that was by taking to the boats. This was a desperate undertaking, but it was the only way of escape now left.

There were three boats on board—viz., the long-boat, the cutter, and the gig. These were the only hope now left them. By venturing in these there would be a chance of escape.

On the morning of the fourth day, when it was found that the water was increasing, Brandon called the men together and stated this to them. He then told them that it would be necessary to divide themselves so that a sufficient number should go in each boat. He offered to

give up to them the two larger boats, and take the gig for himself, his servant, and the young lady.

To this the men assented with great readiness. Some of them urged him to go in the larger boat, and even offered to exchange with him; but Brandon declined.

They then prepared for their desperate venture. All the provisions and water that could be needed were put on board of each boat. Firearms were not forgotten. Arrangements were made for a long and arduous voyage. The men still worked at the pumps; and though the water gained on them, yet time was gained for completing these important preparations.

About mid-day all was ready. Fifteen feet of water were in the hold. The ship could not last much longer. There was no time to lose.

But how could the boats be put out? How could they live in such a sea? This was the question to be decided.

The ship lay as before in the trough of the sea. On the windward side the waves came rushing up, beating upon and sweeping over her. On the leeward the water was calmer, but the waves tossed and raged angrily even there.

Only twenty were left out of the ship's company. The rest were all missing. Of these, fourteen were to go in the long-boat, and six in the cutter. Brandon, Beatrice, and Cato were to take the gig.

The sailors put the gig out first. The light boat floated buoyantly on the waters. Cato leaped into her, and she was fastened by a long line to the ship. The nimble Hindu, trained for a lifetime to encounter the giant surges of the Malabar coast, managed the little boat with marvelous dexterity — avoiding the sweep of the waves which dashed around, and keeping sufficiently under the lee to escape the rougher waves, yet not so much so as to be hurled against the vessel.

Then the sailors put out the long-boat. This was a difficult undertaking, but it was successfully accomplished, and the men were all on board at last. Instantly they prepared to row away.

At that moment a wilder wave came pouring over the ship. It was as though the ocean, enraged at the escape of these men, had made a final effort to grasp its prey. Before the boat with its living freight had got rid of the vessel, the sweep of this gigantic wave, which had passed completely over the ship, struck it where it lay. Brandon turned away his eyes involuntarily.

There was a wild shriek—the next moment the black outline of the long-boat, bottom upward, was seen amidst the foaming billows.

The men who waited to launch the cutter were at first paralyzed by this tragedy, but there was no time to lose. Death threatened them behind as well as before; behind, death was certain; before, there was still a chance. They launched the cutter in desperation. The six men succeeded in getting into her, and in rowing out at some distance. As wave after wave rose and fell she disappeared from view, and then reappeared, till at last Brandon thought that she at least was safe.

Then he raised his hand and made a peculiar signal to Cato.

The Hindu understood it. Brandon had given him his directions before. Now was the time. The roll of the waves coming up was for the present less dangerous.

Beatrice, who during the whole storm had been calm, and had quietly done whatever Brandon told her, was now waiting at the cabin-door in obedience to his directions.

As soon as Brandon had made the signal he hurried to the cabin-door and assisted Beatrice to the quarter-deck. Cato rowed his boat close up to the ship, and was waiting for a chance to come within reach. The waves were still more moderate. It was the opportunity for which Cato had been watching so long. He held his oars poised, and, as a sudden swell of a wave rose near the ship, he forced his boat so that it came close beside it, rising high on the crest of the swell.

As the wave rose Brandon also had watched his opportunity as well as the action of Cato. It was the moment too for which he had been watching. In an instant, and without a word, he caught Beatrice in his arms, raised her high in the air, poised himself for a moment on the edge of the quarter-deck, and sprang forward into the boat. His foot rested firmly on the seat where it struck. He set Beatrice down, and with a knife severed the line which connected the boat with the ship.

Then seizing an oar he began to row with all his strength. Cato had the bow oar. The next wave came, and its sweep, communicating itself to the water, rolled on, dashing against the ship and moving under it, rising up high, lifting the boat with it, and bearing it along. But the boat was now under command, and the two rowers held it so that while it was able to avoid the dash of the water, it could yet gain from it all the momentum that could be given.

Brandon handled the oar with a dexterity equal to that of the Hindu, and under such management, which was at once strong and skillful, the boat skimmed lightly over the crests of the rolling waves, and passed out into the sea beyond. There the great surges came sweeping on, rising high behind the boat, each wave seeming about to crush the little bark in its resistless grasp, but notwithstanding the threat the boat seemed always able by some good luck to avoid the impending danger, for as each wave came forward the boat would rise up till it was on a level with the crest, and the flood of waters would sweep on underneath, bearing it onward.

After nearly half an hour's anxious and careful rowing Brandon looked all about to find the cutter. It was nowhere to be seen. Again and again he looked for it, seeking in all directions. But he discovered no sign of it on the raging waters, and at last he could no longer doubt that the cutter also, like the long-boat, had perished in the sea.

All day long they rowed before the wind and wave—not strongly, but lightly, so as to husband their strength. Night came, when Brandon and Cato took turns at the oars—not over-exerting themselves, but seeking chiefly to keep the boat's head in a proper direction, and to evade the rush of the waves. This last was their constant danger, and it required the utmost skill and the most incessant watchfulness to do so.

All this time Beatrice sat in the stern, with a heavy oil-cloth coat around her, which Brandon

"WITHOUT A WORD HE CAUGHT BEATRICE IN HIS ARMS," ETC.

directed her to put on, saying nothing, but seeing every thing with her watchful, vigilant eyes.

"Are you afraid?" said Brandon once, just after they had evaded an enormous wave.

"No!" was the reply, in a calm, sweet voice; "I trust in you."

"I hope your trust may not be vain," replied Brandon.

"You have saved my life so often," said Beatrice, "that my trust in you has now become a habit."

She smiled faintly as she spoke. There was something in her tone which sank deep into his soul.

The night passed and morning came.

For the last half of the night the wind had been much less boisterous, and toward morning the gale had very greatly subsided. Brandon's foresight had secured a mast and sail on board the gig, and now, as soon as it could be erected with safety, he put it up, and the little boat dashed bravely over the waters. The waves had lessened greatly as the day wore on; they no longer rose in such giant masses, but showed merely the more common proportions. Brandon and Cato now had an opportunity to get some rest from their exhaustive labors. Beatrice at last yielded to Brandon's earnest request, and, finding that the immediate peril had passed, and that his toil for the present was over, she obtained some sleep and rest for herself.

For all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, the little boat sped over the waters, heading due east, so as to reach land wherever

they might find it, in the hope that the land might not be very far away from the civilized settlements of the coast. The provisions and water which had been put in the boat formed an ample supply, which would last for a long time. Brandon shared with Cato in the management of the boat, not allowing his man to have more of the labor than himself.

During these days Brandon and Beatrice were of course thrown into a closer intimacy. At such a time the nature of man or woman becomes most apparent, and here Beatrice showed a noble calm and a simple trust which to Brandon was most touching. He knew that she must feel most keenly the fatigue and the privations of such a life; but her unvarying cheerfulness was the same as it had been on shipboard. He, too, exhibited that same constancy and resolution which he had always evinced, and by his consideration for Cato showed his natural kindness of heart.

"How sorry I am that I can do nothing!" Beatrice would say. "You are killing yourself, and I have to sit idle and gain my safety at your expense."

"The fact that you are yet safe," Brandon would reply, "is enough for me. As long as I see you sitting there I can work."

"But can I do nothing? It is hard for me to sit idle while you wear out your life."

"You can sing," said Brandon.

"What?"

"Langhetti's song," he said, and turned his face away.

She sang at once. Her tones rose in marvelous modulations; the words were not much, but the music with which she clothed them seemed again to utter forth that longing which Brandon had heard before.

Now, as they passed over the seas, Beatrice sang, and Brandon did not wish that this life should end. Through the days, as they sailed on, her voice arose expressive of every changeful feeling, now speaking of grief, now swelling in sweet strains of hope.

Day thus succeeded to day until the fourth night came, when the wind died out and a calm spread over the waters.

Brandon, who waked at about two in the morning so as to let Cato sleep, saw that the wind had ceased, and that another one of those treacherous calms had come. He at once put out the oars, and, directing Cato to sleep till he waked him, began to pull.

Beatrice remonstrated. "Do not," said she, in an imploring tone. "You have already done too much. Why should you kill yourself?"

"The wind has stopped," answered Brandon. "The calm is treacherous, and no time ought to be lost."

"But wait till you have rested."

"I have been resting for days."

"Why do you not rest during the night and work in the daytime?"

"Because the daytime is so frightfully hot that work will be difficult. Night is the time to work now."

Brandon kept at his oars, and Beatrice saw that remonstrances were useless. He rowed steadily until the break of day; then, as day was dawning, he rested for a while, and looked earnestly toward the east.

A low, dark cloud lay along the eastern horizon, well-defined against the sky, which now was growing brighter and brighter every hour. Was it cloud, or was it something else? This was the question that rose in Brandon's mind.

The sky grew brighter, the scene far and wide opened up before the gathering light until at last the sun began to appear. Then there was no longer any doubt. It was LAND.

This he told to Beatrice; and the Hindu, waking at the same time, looked earnestly toward that shore which they had been striving so long and so earnestly to reach. It was land, but what land? No doubt it was some part of the coast of Senegambia, but what one? Along that extensive coast there were many places where landing might be certain death, or something worse than death. Savage tribes might dwell there—either those which were demoralized by dealings with slave-traders, or those which were flourishing in native barbarism. Yet only one course was now advisable; namely, to go on till they reached the shore.

It appeared to be about fifty miles away. So Brandon judged, and so it proved. The land which they had seen was the summit of lofty hills which were visible from a great distance. They rowed on all that day. The water was calm and glassy. The sun poured down its most fervid beams, the air was sultry and oppressive. Beatrice entreated Brandon now to desist from rowing and wait till the cool of the night, but he was afraid that a storm might come up suddenly.

"No," he said, "our only hope now is to get near the land, so that if a storm does come up we may have some place of shelter within reach."

After a day of exhaustive labor the land was at last reached.

High hills, covered with palm-trees, rose before them. There was no harbor within sight, no river outlet, but a long, uninterrupted extent of high, wooded shores. Here in the evening they rested on their oars, and looked earnestly at the shore.

Brandon conjectured that they were somewhat to the north of Sierra Leone, and did not think that they could be to the south. At any rate, a southeasterly course was the surest one for them, for they would reach either Sierra Leone or Liberia. The distance which they might have to go was, however, totally uncertain to him.

So they turned the boat's head southeast, and moved in a line parallel with the general line of the shore. That shore varied in its features as they passed along; sometimes depressed into low, wide savannas; at others, rising into a rolling country, with hills of moderate height, behind which appeared the summits of lofty mountains, empurpled by distance.

It was evening when they first saw the land, and then they went on without pausing. It was arranged that they should row alternately, as moderately as possible, so as to husband their strength. Cato rowed for the first part of that night, then Brandon rowed till morning. On the following day Cato took the oars again.

It was now just a week since the wreck, and for the last two days there had not been a breath of wind in the air, nor the faintest ripple on that burning water. To use even the slightest exertion in such torrid heat was almost impossible. Even to sit still under that blighting sun,

with the reflected glare from the dead, dark sea around, was painful.

Beatrice redoubled her entreaties to Brandon that he should rest. She wished to have her mantle spread over their heads as a kind of canopy, or fix the sail in some way and float idly through the hottest part of the day. But Brandon insisted that he felt no evil effects as yet; and promised when he did feel such to do as she said.

At last they discovered that their water was almost out, and it was necessary to get a fresh supply. It was the afternoon of the seventh day. Brandon had been rowing ever since midday. Beatrice had wound her mantle about his head in the style of an Eastern turban so as to protect him from the sun's rays. Looking out for some place along the shore where they might obtain water, they saw an opening in the line of coast where two hills arose to a height of several hundred feet. Toward this Brandon rowed.

Stimulated by the prospect of setting foot on shore Brandon rowed somewhat more vigorously than usual; and in about an hour the boat entered a beautiful little cove shut in between two hills, which formed the outlet of a river. Far up its winding course could be traced by the trees along its borders. The hills rose on each side with a steep slope, and were covered with palms. The front of the harbor was shut in from the sea by a beautiful little wooded island. Here Brandon rowed the boat into this cove; and its prow grated against the pebbles of the beach.

Beatrice had uttered many exclamations of delight at the beauty of this scene. At length, surprised at Brandon's silence, she cried,

"Why do you not say something? Surely this is a Paradise after the sea!"

She looked up with an enthusiastic smile.

He had risen to his feet. A strange, vacant expression was in his eyes. He made a step forward as if to land. His unsteady foot trembled. He reeled, and stretched out his arms like some one groping in the dark.

Beatrice shrieked and sprang forward. Too late; for the next moment he fell headlong into the water.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BADINAGE OF OLD FRIENDS.

THE town of Holby is on the coast of Pembroke. It has a small harbor, with a light-house, and the town itself contains a few thousand people, most of them belonging to the poorer class. The chief house in the town stands on a rising ground a little outside, looking toward the water. Its size and situation render it the most conspicuous object in the neighborhood.

This house, from its appearance, must have been built more than a century before. It belonged to an old family which had become extinct, and now was occupied by a new owner, who had given it another name. This new owner was William Thornton, Esq., solicitor, who had an office in Holby, and who, though very wealthy, still attended to his business with undiminished application. The house had been originally purchased by the father of the present occupant, Henry Thornton, a well-known lawyer in these parts, who had settled here originally a poor young man, but had finally grown gray and rich in his adopted home. He had bought the place when it was exposed for sale, with the intention of founding a new seat for his own family, and had given it the name of Thornton Grange.

Generations of care and tasteful culture had made Thornton Grange one of the most beautiful places in the county. All around were wide parks dotted with ponds and clumps of trees. An avenue of elms led up to the door. A well-kept lawn was in front, and behind was an extensive grove. Every thing spoke of wealth and elegance.

On an afternoon in February a gentleman in clerical dress walked up the avenue, rang at the door, and entering he gave his name to the servant as the Rev. Courtenay Despard. He was the new Rector of Holby, and had only been there one week.

He entered the drawing-room, sat down upon one of the many lounging chairs with which it was filled, and waited. He did not have to wait long. A rapid step was soon heard descending the stairs, and in a few minutes a lady entered. She came in with a bright smile of welcome on her face, and greeted him with much warmth.

Mrs. Thornton was very striking in her appearance. A clear olive complexion and large, dark hazel eyes marked Southern blood. Her hair was black, wavy, and exceedingly luxuriant. Her mouth was small, her hands and feet delicately shaped, and her figure slender and elegant. Her whole air had that indefinable grace which is the sign of high-breeding; to this there was added exceeding loveliness, with great animation of face and elegance of manner. She was a perfect lady, yet not of the English stamp; for her looks and manner had not that cold and phlegmatic air which England fosters. She looked rather like some Italian beauty—like those which enchant us as they smile from the walls of the picture-galleries of Italy.

"I am so glad you have come!" said she. "It is so stupid here, and I expected you an hour ago."

"Oh, if I had only known that!" said Despard. "For, do you know, I have been dying of ennui."

"I hope that I may be the means of dispelling it."

"As surely so as the sun disperses the clouds."

"You are never at a loss for a compliment."

"Never when I am with you."

These few words were spoken with a smile by each, and a slightly melodramatic gesture, as though each was conscious of a little extravagance.

"You must be glad to get to your old home," she resumed. "You lived here fifteen, no, sixteen years, you know."

"Eighteen."

"So it was. I was sixteen when you left."

"Never to see you again till I came back," said Despard, with some mournfulness, looking at the floor.

"And since then all has changed."

"But I have not," rejoined Despard, in the same tone.

Mrs. Thornton said nothing for a moment.

"By-the-way, I've been reading such a nice book," she resumed. "It has just come out,

and is making a sensation. It would suit you, I know."

"What is it?"

She rose and lifted a book from the table, which she handed to him. He took it, and read the title out loud.

"Christian's Cross."

A strange expression passed over his face. He looked at her, holding the book out at arms' length with feigned consternation.

"And do you have the heart to recommend this book to me, Mrs. Thornton?"

"Why not?"

"Why, it's religious. Religious books are my terror. How could I possibly open a book like this?"

She laughed.

"You are mistaken," she said. "It is an ordinary novel, and for the sake of your peace of mind I assure you that there is not a particle of religion in it. But why should you look with such repugnance upon it? The expression of your face is simply horror."

"Pietistic books have been the bane of my life. The emotional, the rhapsodical, the meditative style of book, in which one garrulously addresses one's soul from beginning to end, is simply torture to me. You see religion is a different thing. The rhapsody may do for the Tabernacle people, but thoughtful men and women need something different."

"I am so delighted to hear such sentiments from a clergyman! They entirely accord with my own. Still I must own that your horror struck me as novel, to say the least of it."

"Would you like me to try to proselytize you?"

"You may try if you wish. I am open to conviction; but the Church of all the ages, the Apostolic, the Catholic, has a strong hold on me."

"You need not fear that I will ever try to loosen it. I only wish that I may see your face in Trinity Church every Sunday."

"That happiness shall be yours," answered Mrs. Thornton. "As there is no Catholic church here, I will give you the honor of my presence at Trinity."

"If that is the case it will be a place of worship to me."

He smiled away the extravagance of this last remark, and she only shook her head.

"That is a compliment, but it is awfully profane."

"Not profanity; say rather justifiable idolatry."

"Really, I feel overcome; I do not know what to say. At any rate, I hope you will like the book; I know you will find it pleasant."

"Any thing that comes from you could not be otherwise," said Despard. "At the same time it is not my habit to read novels singly."

"Singly! Why how else can one read them?"

"I always read several at a time."

Mrs. Thornton laughed at the whimsical idea.

"You see," said Despard, "one must keep up with the literature of the day. I used to read each book as it came out, but at last found satiety. The best novel palls. For my own comfort I had to invent a new plan to stimulate my interest. I will tell you about it. I take ten at a time, spread them on the table in front of me, and read each chapter in succession."

"Isn't that a little confusing?"

"Not at all," said Despard, gravely. "Practice enables one to keep all distinct."

"But what is the good of it?"

"This," replied Despard; "you see in each novel there are certain situations. Perhaps on an average there may be forty each. Interesting characters also may average ten each. Thrilling scenes twenty each. Overwhelming catastrophes fifteen each. Now by reading novels singly the effect of all this is weakened, for you only have the work of each in its divided, isolated state, but where you read according to my plan you have the aggregate of all these effects in one combined—that is to say, in ten books which I read at once I have two hundred thrilling scenes, one hundred and fifty overwhelming catastrophes, one hundred interesting characters, and four hundred situations of absorbing fascination. Do you not see what an advantage there is in my plan? By following this rule I have been able to stimulate a somewhat faded appetite, and to keep abreast of the literature of the day."

"What an admirable plan! And do you read all books in that way? Why, one could write ten novels at a time on the same principle, and if so he ought to write very much better."

"I think I will try it some day. At present I am busily engaged with a learned treatise on the Symbolical Nature of the Mosaic Economy, and—"

"The—what?" cried Mrs. Thornton, breathlessly. "What was that?"

"The Symbolical Nature of the Mosaic Economy," said Despard, placidly.

"And is the title all your own?"

"All my own."

"Then pray don't write the book. The title is enough. Publish that, and see if it does not of itself by its own extraordinary merits bring you undying fame."

"I've been thinking seriously of doing so," said Despard, "and I don't know but that I may follow your advice. It will save some trouble, and perhaps amount to just as much in the end."

"And do you often have such brilliant fancies?"

"No, frankly, not often. I consider that title the one great idea of my life."

"But do not dwell too much upon that," said Mrs. Thornton, in a warning voice. "It might make you conceited."

"Do you think so?" rejoined the other, with a shudder. "Do you really think so? I hope not. At any rate I hope you do not like conceited people?"

"No."

"Am I conceited?"

"No. I like you," replied Mrs. Thornton, with a slight bow and a wave of the hand, which she accompanied with a smile.

"And I like you," said Despard, in the same tone.

"You could not do less."

"This," said Despard, with an air of thoughtful seriousness, "is a solemn occasion. After such a tender confession from each of us what remains to be done? What is it that the novels lay down?"

"I'm sure," returned Mrs. Thornton, with the

same assumed solemnity, "it is not for me to say. You must make the proposition."

"We can not do any thing less than fly together."

"I should think not."

"But where?"

"And not only where, but how? By rail, by steamboat, or by canal? A canal strikes me as the best mode of flight. It is secluded."

"Free from observation," said Despard.

"Quiet," rejoined Mrs. Thornton.

"Poetic."

"Remote."

"Unfriended."

"Solitary."

"Slow."

"And, best of all, hitherto untried."

"Yes, its novelty is undeniable."

"So much so," said Mrs. Thornton, "that it overwhelms one. It is a bright, original idea, and in these days of commonplace is it not creditable? The idea is mine, Sir, and I will match it with your—what?—your Symbolical Nature of the Mosaic Cosmogony."

"Economy."

"But Cosmogony is better. Allow me to suggest it by way of a change."

"It must be so, since you say it; but I have a weakness for the word Economy. It is derived from the Greek—"

"Greek!" exclaimed Mrs. Thornton, raising her hands. "You surely are not going to be so ungenerous as to quote Greek! Am I not a lady? Will you be so base as to take me at a disadvantage in that way?"

"I am thoroughly ashamed of myself, and you may consider that a tacit apology is going on within my mind whenever I see you."

"You are forgiven," said Mrs. Thornton.

"I can not conceive how I could have so far forgotten myself. I do not usually speak Greek to ladies. I consider it my duty to make myself agreeable. And you have no idea how agreeable I can make myself, if I try."

"I? I have no idea? Is it you who say that, and to me?" exclaimed Mrs. Thornton, in that slight melodramatic tone which she had employed thus far, somewhat exaggerated. "After what I told you—of my feelings?"

"I see I shall have to devote all the rest of my life to making apologies."

"No. Do not make apologies. Avoid your besetting sins. Otherwise, fond as I am of you"—and she spoke with exaggerated solemnity—"I must regard you as a failure."

The conversation went on uninterruptedly in this style for some time. It appeared to suit each of them. Despard's face, naturally grave, assisted him toward maintaining the mock-serious tone which he chose to adopt; and Mrs. Thornton's peculiar style of face gave her the same advantage. It pleased each to express for the other an exaggerated sentiment of regard. They considered it banter and badinage. How far it was safe was another thing. But they had known one another years before, and were only resuming the manner of earlier times.

Yet, after all, was it safe for the grave Rector of Holby to adopt the inflated style of a troubadour in addressing the Lady of Thornton Grange? Neither of them thought of it. They simply improved the shining hour after this fashion, until at length the conversation was interrupted by the opening of folding-doors, and the entrance of a servant who announced—dinner.

On entering the dining-room Despard was greeted with respectful formality by the master of the house. He was a man of about forty, with the professional air of the lawyer about him, and an abstracted expression of face, such as usually belongs to one who is deeply engrossed in the cares of business. His tone, in spite of its friendliness, was naturally stiff, and was in marked contrast to the warmth of Mrs. Thornton's greeting.

"How do you like your new quarters?" he asked, as they sat down.

"Very well," said Despard. "It is more my home, you know, than any other place. I lived there so many years as school-boy with Mr. Carson that it seems natural to take up my station there as home."

Mr. Thornton relapsed into his abstraction while Despard was speaking, who directed the remainder of his conversation to Mrs. Thornton.

It was light, idle chat, in the same tone as that in which they had before indulged. Once or twice, at some unusually extravagant remark, Mr. Thornton looked up in perplexity, which was not lessened on seeing their perfect gravity.

They had a long discussion as to the meaning of the phrase "the day after to-morrow." Despard asserted that it meant the same as eternal duration, and insisted that it must be so, since when to-morrow came the day after it was still coming, and when that came there was still the day after. He supported his theory with so much earnestness that Thornton, after listening for a while, took the trouble to go heavily and at length into the whole question, and conclude it triumphantly against Despard.

Then the subject of politics came up, and a probable war with France was considered. Despard professed to take no interest in the subject, since, even if an invasion took place, clergymen could do nothing. They were exempt from military duty in common with gaugers. The mention of this brought on a long discussion as to the spelling of the word gauger. Despard asserted that nobody knew how it was spelled, and that, from the necessities of human nature, it was simply impossible to tell whether it was *gauger* or *guager*. This brought out Thornton again, who mentioned several law papers in which the word had been correctly written by his clerks. Despard challenged him on this, and, because Thornton had to confess that he had not examined the word, dictionary in hand, he claimed a victory over him.

Thornton, at this, looked away, with the smile of a man who is talking unintelligible things to a child.

Then followed a long conversation between Despard and Mrs. Thornton about religion, art, music, and a miscellaneous assemblage of other things, which lasted for a long time. At length he rose to go. Mrs. Thornton went to a side-table and took up a book.

"Here," said she, "is the little book you lent me; I ought to have sent it, but I thought you would come for it."

"And so I will," said he, "some day."

"Come for it to-morrow."

"Will you be at home?"

"MRS. THORNTON, WALKING TO THE WINDOW, LOOKED OUT."

"Yes."

"Then of course I'll come. And now I must tear myself away. Good-night!"

On the following day, at about two o'clock, Despard called again. Mrs. Thornton had been writing, and the desk was strewn with papers.

"I know I am disturbing you," said he, after the usual greetings. "I see that you are writing, so I will not stay but a moment. I have come, you know, after that little book."

"Indeed, you are not disturbing me at all. I have been trying to continue a letter which I began to my brother a month ago. There is no hurry about it."

"And how is Paolo?"

"I have not heard for some time. I ought to hear soon. He went to America last summer, and I have not had a word from him since. My letter is of no importance, I assure you, and now, since you are here, you shall not go. Indeed, I only touched it a minute ago. I have been looking at some pictures till I am so begrimed and inundated with dust that I feel as though I had been resolved into my original element." And she held up her hands with a pretty gesture of horror.

Despard looked at her for a moment as she stood in her bright beauty before him. A sudden expression of pain flashed over his face, succeeded by his usual smile.

"Dust never before took so fair a form," he said, and sat down, looking on the floor.

"For unfailing power of compliment, for an unending supply of neat and pretty speeches, commend me to the Rev. Courtenay Despard."

"Yet, singularly enough, no one else ever dreamed that of me."

"You were always so."

"With you."

"In the old days."

"Now lost forever."

Their voices sank low and expressive of a deep melancholy. A silence followed. Despard at last, with a sudden effort, began talking in his usual extravagant strain about badgers till at last Mrs. Thornton began to laugh, and the radiancy of their spirits was restored. "Strange," said he, taking up a prayer-book with a peculiar binding, on which there was a curiously intertwisted figure in gilt. "That pattern has been in my thoughts and dreams for a week."

"How so?"

"Why, I saw it in your hands last Sunday, and my eyes were drawn to it till its whole figure

seemed to stamp itself on my mind. See! I can trace it from memory." And, taking his cane, he traced the curiously involved figure on the carpet.

"And were your thoughts fixed on nothing better than that?"

"I was engaged in worship," was the reply, with marked emphasis.

"I must take another book next time."

"Do not. You will only force me to study another pattern."

Mrs. Thornton laughed lightly, and Despard looked at her with a smile.

"I'm afraid your thoughts wander," she said, lightly, "as mine do. There is no excuse for you. There is for me. For you know I'm like Naaman; I have to bow my head in the temple of Baal. After all," she continued, in a more serious voice, "I suppose I shall be able some day to worship before my own altar, for, do you know, I expect to end my days in a convent."

"And why?"

"For the purpose of perfect religious seclusion."

Despard looked at her earnestly for a moment. Then his usual smile broke out.

"Wherever you go let me know, and I'll take up my abode outside the walls and come and look at you every day through the grating."

"And would that be a help to a religious life?"

"Perhaps not; but I'll tell you what would be a help. Be a Sister of Charity. I'll be a Paulist. I'll devote myself to the sick. Then you and I can go together; and when you are tired I can assist you. I think that idea is much better than yours."

"Oh, very much, indeed!" said Mrs. Thornton, with a strange, sad look.

"I remember a boy and girl who once used to go hand in hand over yonder shore, and—" He stopped suddenly, and then hastily added, "and now it would be very sad, and therefore very absurd, in one of them to bring up old memories."

Mrs. Thornton suddenly rose, and, walking to the window, looked out. "I wonder if it will rain to day!" she said, in a sweet voice, full of a tremulous melancholy.

"There are very dark clouds about," returned Despard, mournfully.

"I hope there will not be a storm," she rejoined, with the same sadness. Her hands were held tightly together. "Some things will perish if a storm comes."

"Let us pray that there may be calm and peace," said Despard.

She turned and looked at him for a moment. Strange that these two should pass so quickly from gayety to gloom! Their eyes met, and each read in the face of the other sadness beyond words.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO LETTERS.

DESPARD did not go back to the Grange for some days. About a week had passed since the scenes narrated in the preceding chapter when one morning, having finished his breakfast, he went into his library and sat down at the table to write. A litter of papers lay all around. The walls were covered with shelves, filled with books. The table was piled high with ponderous tomes. Manuscripts were strewn around, and books were scattered on the floor. Yet, amidst all this disorder, some order was apparent, for many of these books lay open in certain places, and others were arranged so as to be within reach.

Several sheets of paper, covered with writing, lay before him, headed, "The Byzantine Poets." The books were all in Greek. It was the library of a hard-working student.

Very different was the Despard of the library from the Despard who had visited the Grange. A stern and thoughtful expression was read in his face, and his eyes had an abstraction which would have done credit to Mr. Thornton himself.

Taking his seat at the table, he remained for a while leaning his head on his hand in deep thought. Then he took up a pen and drew a piece of paper before him to try it. He began to draw upon it the same figure which he had marked with his cane on Mrs. Thornton's carpet. He traced this figure over and over, until at last the whole sheet was covered.

Suddenly he flung down the pen, and, taking up the paper, leaned back in his chair with a melancholy face. "What a poor, weak thing I am!" he muttered at last, and let the paper fall to the floor. He leaned his head on his hand, then resumed his pen and began to make some idle marks. At length he began to draw.

Under the fine and delicate strokes of his pen, which were as neat and as exquisite as the most subtle touches of an engraving, a picture gradually rose to view. It was a sea-side scene. The place was Holby Beach. In the distance was the light-house; and on one side a promontory, which protected the harbor. Upon the shore, looking out toward the sea, was a beautiful girl, of about sixteen years of age, whose features, as they grew beneath his tender touches, were those of Mrs. Thornton. Then beside her there gradually rose another figure, a youth of about eighteen, with smooth face and clustering locks, who looked exactly like what the Rev. Courtenay Despard might have been some seven or eight years before. His left arm was around her waist, her arm was thrown up till it touched his shoulder, and his right hand held hers. Her head leaned against him, and both of them, with a subdued expression of perfect happiness, tinged with a certain pensive sadness, were looking out upon the setting sun.

As soon as he finished he looked at the sketch, and then, with a sudden impulse, tore it into a thousand small fragments. He drew the written manuscript before him with a long and deep-drawn sigh, and began writing with great rapidity upon the subject of the Byzantine Poets. He had just written the following words:

"The Anacreontic hymns of John Damascenus form a marked contrast to—" when the sentence was interrupted by a knock at the door. "Come in!" It was the servant with letters from the post-office. Despard put down his pen gravely, and the man laid two letters on the table. He waited till the servant had departed, then seizing one of them, a small one, addressed in a lady's hand, he pressed it vehemently to his lips and tore it open.

It was as follows:

"BOTH WERE LOOKING OUT UPON THE SETTING SUN."

"DEAR MR. DESPARD,—I suppose I may *never* expect to see you again. Yet I must see you, for yesterday I received a very long letter from Paolo of so singular a character that you will have to explain it to me. I shall expect you this afternoon, and till then, I remain,

"Yours sincerely,

"TERESA THORNTON.

"THORNTON GRANGE, *Friday.*"

Despard read this letter a score of times, and placed it reverently in an inner drawer of his desk. He then opened the other, and read as follows:

"HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, *January* 12, 1847.

"MY DEAR COURTENAY,—I was very glad to hear of your appointment as Rector of Holby, your old home, and hope that by this time you are fully established in the old Rectory, where you spent so many years. I was there often enough in poor old Carson's days to know that it was a fine old place.

"You will see by this that I am in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My regiment was ordered off here last November, and I am just beginning to feel settled. It is not so cold here as it was in Quebec. There is capital moose hunting up the country. I don't admire my accommodations much; but it is not a bad little town, considering all things. The people are pleasant, and there is some stir and gayety occasionally.

"Not long before leaving Quebec, who do you think turned up? No less a person than Paolo Langhetti, who in the course of his wanderings came out there. He had known some extraordinary adventures on his voyage out; and these are the immediate cause of this letter.

"He took passage early in June last in the ship *Tecumseh*, from Liverpool for Quebec. It was an emigrant ship, and crammed with passengers. You have heard all about the horrors of that middle passage, which occurred last year, when those infernal Liverpool merchants, for the sake of putting a few additional pounds in their pockets, sent so many thousands to destruction.

"The *Tecumseh* was one of these. It was crammed with emigrants. You know Langhetti's extraordinary pluck, and his queer way of devoting himself for others. Well, what did he do but this: as soon as the ship-fever broke out he left the cabin and took up his abode in the steerage with the sick emigrants. He is very quiet about this, and merely says that he helped to nurse the sick. I know what that means.

"The mortality was terrific. Of all the ships that came to Quebec on that fatal summer the *Tecumseh* showed the largest record of deaths. On reaching the quarantine station Langhetti at

once insisted on continuing his attendance on the sick. Hands were scarce, and his offer was eagerly accepted. He staid down there ever so long till the worst of the sickness was over.

"Among the passengers on the *Tecumseh* were three who belonged to the superior class. Their names were Brandon. He took a deep interest in them. They suffered very much from sickness both during the voyage and at quarantine. The name at once attracted him, being one well known both to him and to us. At last they all died, or were supposed to have died, at the quarantine station. Langhetti, however, found that one of them was only in a 'trance state,' and his efforts for resuscitation were successful. This one was a young girl of not more than sixteen years of age. After her restoration he left the quarantine bringing her with him, and came up to the city. Here he lived for a month or so, until at last he heard of me and came to see me.

"Of course I was delighted to see him, for I always thought him the noblest fellow that ever breathed, though most undoubtedly cranky if not crazy. I told him we were going to Halifax, and as he had no settled plan I made him come here with me.

"The girl remained for a long time in a state of mental torpor, as though her brain had been affected by disease, but the journey here had a beneficial effect on her, and during her stay she has steadily improved. About a week ago Langhetti ventured to ask her all about herself.

"What will you say when I tell you that she is the daughter of poor Ralph Brandon, of Brandon Hall, your father's friend, whose wretched fate has made us all so miserable. You know nothing of this, of course; but where was Thornton? Why did not he do something to prevent this horror, this unutterable calamity? Good God! what suffering there is in this world!

"Now, Courtenay, I come to the point. This poor Edith Brandon, still half-dead from her grief, has been able to tell us that she has still a relative living. Her eldest brother Louis went to Australia many years ago. A few weeks before her father's death he wrote to his son telling him every thing, and imploring him to come home. She thinks that her brother must be in England by this time.

"I want you to hunt up Louis Brandon. Spare no trouble. In the name of God, and by the memory of your father, whose most intimate friend was this poor old Brandon, I entreat you to search after Louis Brandon till you find him, and let him know the fate of his friends. I think if she could see him the joy of meeting one relative would restore her to health.

"My boy, I know I have said enough. Your own heart will impel you to do all that can be done for the sake of this poor young girl. You can find out the best ways of learning information. You had better go up at once to London and make arrangements for finding Brandon. Write me soon, and let me know.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"HENRY DESPARD."

Despard read this letter over and over. Then he put it in his pocket, and walked up and down the room in deep thought. Then he took out Mrs. Thornton's note and studied it for a long time. So the hours passed away, until at length two o'clock came and he set out for Thornton Grange.

On entering the drawing-room, Mrs. Thornton was there.

"So you have come at last," said she, as they shook hands.

"As if I would not come ten times a day if I could," was the answer, in an impetuous voice.

"Still there is no reason why you should persistently avoid the Grange."

"What would you say if I followed my own impulse, and came here every day?"

"I would say, Good-morning, Sir. Still, now that you are here, you must stay."

"I will stay, whether I must or not."

"Have you recovered from the effect of my prayer-book yet?"

"No, nor ever will I. You brought the same one last Sunday."

"That was in order to weaken the effect. Familiarity breeds contempt, you know."

"Then all I can say is, that contempt has very extraordinary manifestations. Among other strange things, it makes me cover my paper with that pattern when I ought to be writing on the Mosaic Economy."

"Cosmogony, you mean."

"Well, then, Cosmogony."

"Cosmogony is such a delicious word! It has been the hope of my life to be able to introduce it in a conversation. There is only one other word that compares with it."

"What is it?"

"I am afraid to pronounce it."

"Try, at any rate."

"Idiosyncrasy," said Mrs. Thornton. For five or six years I have been on the look-out for an opportunity to use that word, and thus far I have been unsuccessful. I fear that if the opportunity did occur I would call it 'idiocracy.' In fact, I know I would."

"And what would be the difference? Your motive would be right, and it is to motives that we must look, not acts."

After some further badinage, Mrs. Thornton drew a letter from her pocket.

"Here," said she, gravely, "is Paolo's letter. Read it, and tell me what you think of it."

Despard took the letter and began to read, while Mrs. Thornton, sitting opposite to him, watched his face.

The letter was in Italian, and was accompanied by a large and closely-written manuscript of many pages.

"HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, *January* 2, 1847.

"MY SWEETEST LITTLE SISTER,—I send you my diary, as I promised you, my Teresélla, and you will see all my adventures. Take care of yourself, be happy, and let us hope that we may see one another soon. I am well, through the mercy of the good God, and hope to continue so. There is no such thing as music in this place, but I have found an organ where I can play. My Cremona is uninjured, though it has passed through hard times—it sends a note of love to my Teresina. Remember your Paolo to the just and upright Thornton, whom you love. May God bless my little sister's husband, and fill his heart with love for the sweetest of children!

"Read this manuscript carefully, Teresola mia dolcissimá, and pray for the souls of those unhappy ones who perished by the pestilence."

CHAPTER XV.

JOURNAL OF PAOLO LANGHETTI.

Liverpool, June 2, 1846.—I promised you, my Teresina, to keep a diary of all my wanderings, and now I begin, not knowing whether it will be worth reading or not, but knowing this: that my corellina will read it all with equal interest, whether it be trivial or important.

I have taken passage in the ship *Tecumseh* from Liverpool to Quebec. I have embarked in her for no better reason than this, that she is the first that will sail, and I am impatient. The first New York ship does not leave for a fortnight. A fortnight in Liverpool! Horror!

I have been on board to secure my room. I am told that there is a large number of emigrants. It is a pity, but it can not be helped. All ships have emigrants now. Ireland is being evacuated. There will soon be no peasants to till the soil. What enormous misery must be in that most wretched of countries! Is Italy worse? Yes, far worse; for Italy has a past to contrast with the present, whereas Ireland has no past.

At Sea, June 4.—We are many miles out in the Irish Channel. There are six hundred emigrants on board—men, women, and children. I am told that most of these are from Ireland, unhappy Ireland! Some are from England, and are going to seek their fortune in America. As I look on them I think, My God! what misery there is in this world! And yet what can I do to alleviate it? I am helpless. Let the world suffer. All will be right hereafter.

June 10.—Six hundred passengers! They are all crowded together in a manner that is frightful to me. Comfort is out of the question; the direst distress is every where present; the poor wretches only try to escape suffering. During storms they are shut in; there is little ventilation; and the horror that reigns in that hold will not let me either eat or sleep. I have remonstrated with the captain, but without effect. He told me that he could do nothing. The owners of the ship put them on board, and he was employed to take them to their proper destination. My God! what will become of them?

June 15.—There have been a few days of fine weather. The wretched emigrants have all been on deck. Among them I noticed three who, from their appearance, belonged to a different class. There was a lady with a young man and a young girl, who were evidently her children. The lady has once been beautiful, and still bears the traces of that beauty, though her face indicates the extreme of sadness. The son is a man of magnificent appearance, though as yet not full-grown. The daughter is more lovely than any being whom I have ever seen. She is different from my Bicetta. Bice is Grecian, with a face like that of a marble statue, and a soul of purely classic mould. Bice is serene. She reminds me of Artemis. Bice is an artist to her inmost heart. Bice I love as I love you, my Teresina, and I never expect to meet with one who can so interpret my ideas with so divine a voice. But this girl is more spiritual. Bice is classic, this one is medieval. Bice is a goddess, this one a saint. Bice is Artemis, or one of the Muses; this one is Holy Agnes or Saint Cecilia. There is in that sweet and holy face the same depth of devotion which our painters portray on the face of the Madonna. This little family group stand amidst all the other passengers, separated by the wide gulf of superior rank, for they are manifestly from among the upper classes, but still more so by the solemn isolation of grief. It is touching to see the love of the mother for her children, and the love of the children for their mother. How can I satisfy the longings which I feel to express to them my sympathy?

June 21.—I have at length gained my desire. I have become acquainted with that little group. I went up to them this morning in obedience to a resistless impulse, and with the most tender sympathy that I could express; and, with many apologies, offered the young man a bottle of wine for his mother. He took it gratefully and frankly. He met me half-way in my advances. The poor lady looked at me with speechless gratitude, as though kindness and sympathy were unknown to her. "God will reward you, Sir," she said, in a tremulous voice, "for your sympathy with the miserable."

"Dear Madame," said I, "I wish no other reward than the consciousness that I may have alleviated your distress."

My heart bled for these poor creatures. Cast down from a life which must have once been one of luxury, they were now in the foulest of places, the hold of an emigrant ship. I went back to the captain to see if I could not do something in their behalf. I wished to give up my room to them. He said I could do so if I wished, but that there was no room left in the cabin. Had there been I would have hired one and insisted on their going there.

I went to see the lady, and made this proposal as delicately as I could. There were two berths in my room. I urged her and her daughter to take them. At first they both refused most positively, with tears of gratitude. But I would not be so put off. To the mother I portrayed the situation of the daughter in that den of horror; to the daughter I pointed out the condition of the mother; to the son I showed the position of his mother and sister, and thus I worked upon the holiest feelings of their hearts. For myself I assured them that I could get a place among the sailors in the forecastle, and that I preferred doing so. By such means as these I moved them to consent. They did so with an expression of thankfulness that brought tears to my eyes.

"Dear Madame," said I, "you will break my heart if you talk so. Take the room and say nothing. I have been a wanderer for years, and can live any where."

It was not till then that I found out their names. I told them mine. They looked at one another in astonishment. "Langhetti?" said the mother.

"Yes."

"Did you ever live in Holby?"

"Yes. My father was organist in Trinity Church, and I and my sister lived there some years. She lives there still."

"My God!" was her ejaculation.

"Why?" I asked, with eager curiosity. "What do you know about Holby, and about Langhetti?"

She looked at me with solemn earnestness. "I," said she, "am the wife, and these are the children of one who was your father's friend. He who was my husband, and the father of these children, was Ralph Brandon, of Brandon Hall."

I stood for a moment stupefied. Then I burst into tears. Then I embraced them all, and said I know not what of pity and sympathy and affection. My God! to think of such a fate as this awaiting the family of Ralph Brandon. Did you know this, oh, Teresina? If so, why did you keep it secret? But no—you could not have known it. If you had this would not have happened.

They took my room in the cabin—the dear ones—Mrs. Brandon and the sweet Edith. The son Frank and I stay together among the emigrants. Here I am now, and I write this as the sun is getting low, and the uproar of all these hundreds is sounding in my ears.

June 30.—There is a panic in the ship. The dread pestilence known as "ship-fever" has appeared. This disease is the terror of emigrant ships. Surely there was never any vessel so well adapted to be the prey of the pestilence as this of ours! I have lived for ten days among the steerage passengers, and have witnessed their misery. Is God just? Can he look down unmoved upon scenes like these? Now that the disease has come, where will it stop?

July 3.—The disease is spreading. Fifteen are prostrate. Three have died.

July 10.—Thirty deaths have occurred, and fifty are sick. I am assisting to nurse them.

July 15.—Thirty-four deaths since my last. One hundred and thirty are sick. I will labor here if I have to die for it.

July 18.—If this is my last entry let this diary be sent to Mrs. Thornton, care of William Thornton, Holby, Pembroke, England—(the above entry was written in English, the remainder was all in Italian, as before). More than two hundred are sick. Frank Brandon is down. I am afraid to let his mother know it. I am working night and day. In three days there have been forty-seven deaths. The crew are demoralized and panic-stricken.

July 23.—Shall I survive these horrors? More than fifty new deaths have occurred. The disease has spread among the sailors. Two are dead, and seven are sick. Horror prevails. Frank Brandon is recovering slowly. Mrs. Brandon does not know that he has been sick. We send word that we are afraid to come for fear of communicating the disease to her and to Edith.

July 27.—More than half of the sailors are sick. Eleven dead. Sixty-seven passengers dead since last report. Frank Brandon almost well, and helping me in my work.

July 30.—Nearly all the sailors more or less sick—five new deaths among them. Ship almost unmanageable. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Talk of putting into some port. Seventy passengers dead.

August 2.—Worse yet. Disease has spread into the cabin. Three cabin passengers dead. God have mercy upon poor Mrs. Brandon and sweet Edith! All the steerage passengers, with a few exceptions, prostrate. Frank Brandon is weak but helps me. I work night and day. The ship is like a floating pest-house. Forty new deaths since last report.

August 7.—Drifting along, I know not how, up the St. Lawrence. The weather calm, and two or three sailors able to manage the ship. Captain and mate both dead. Ten cabin passengers dead. Three more sailors dead. Only thirty-two steerage passengers dead since last report, but nearly all are sick. Hardly any one to attend to them.

August 10.—Mrs. Brandon and Edith both sick. Frank prostrate again. God in heaven, have mercy!

August 15.—Mrs. Brandon and Edith very low. Frank better.

August 16.—Quarantine Station, Gosse Island. I feel the fever in my veins. If I die, farewell, sweetest sister.

December 28, *Halifax, Nova Scotia.*—More than four months have elapsed since my last entry, and during the interval marvelous things have occurred. These I will now try to recall as I best can.

My last entry was made on the day of the arrival of the *Tecumseh* at the Quarantine Station, Gosse Island, Quebec. We were delayed there for two days. Every thing was in confusion. A large number of ships had arrived, and all were filled with sick. The authorities were taken by surprise; and as no arrangements had ever been made for such a state of things the suffering was extreme. The arrival of the *Tecumseh* with her frightful record of deaths, and with several hundred sick still on board, completed the confusion. At last the passengers were removed somehow, I know not how or when, for I myself on the evening of our arrival was struck down by the fever. I suppose that Frank Brandon may have nursed me at first; but of that I am not sure. There was fearful disorder. There were few nurses and fewer doctors; and as fast as the sick died they were hurried hastily into shallow graves in the sand. I was sick for two or three weeks, and knew nothing of what was going on. The first thing that I saw on coming to my senses was Edith Brandon.

She was fearfully changed. Unutterable grief dwelt upon her sweet young face, which also was pale and wan from the sickness through which she had passed. An awful feeling shot through me. My first question was, "Is your mother on shore?"

She looked at me for a moment in solemn silence, and, slowly raising her hand, pointed upward.

"Your brother?" I gasped.

She turned her head away. I was silent. They were dead, then. O God! and this child—what had she not been suffering? My mind at once, in its agony of sympathy with her, burst through the clouds which sickness had thrown around it. "Poor child!" I said. "And why are you here?"

"Where else can I go?" she answered, mournfully.

"At least, you should not wear yourself out by my bedside."

"You are the only one left whom I know. I owe you far more than the small attendance which I have given you."

"But will you not take some rest?"

"Hush! Wait till you are stronger. You are too weak now to think of these things."

She laid her thin hand on my forehead gently. I turned my head away, and burst into a flood of tears. Why was it that this child was called upon to endure such agony? Why, in the midst of that agony, did she come to me to save my life?

I did not resist her any longer on that day; but the next day I was stronger, and made her go and repose herself.

For two successive days she came back. On the third day she did not appear. The fourth day also she was absent. Rude nurses attended to me. They knew nothing of her. My anxiety inspired me with such energy that on the fourth day I rose from my bed and staggered about to find her if possible.

All was still confusion. Thousands of sick were on the island. The mistake of the first week had not yet been repaired. No one knew any thing of Edith. I sought her through all the wards. I went to the superintendent, and forced him to make inquiries about her. No one could tell any thing.

My despair was terrible. I forced the superintendent to call up all the nurses and doctors, and question them all, one by one. At last an old Irish woman, with an awful look at me, hinted that she could tell something about her, and whispered a word or two in the superintendent's ear. He started back, with a fearful glance.

"What is it? Tell, in God's name!"

"The dead-house," he murmured.

"Where is it? Take me there!" I cried to the woman. I clutched her arm and staggered after her.

It was a long, low shed, open on all sides. Twelve bodies lay there. In the middle of the row was Edith. She was more beautiful than an angel. A smile wreathed her lips; her eyes looked as though she slumbered. I rushed up to her and caught her in my arms. The next moment I fell senseless.

When I revived I was lying in one of the sick-sheds, with a crowd of sufferers around me. I had only one thought, and that was Edith. I rose at once, weak and trembling, but the resolve of my soul gave strength to my body. An awful fear had taken possession of me, which was accompanied by a certain wild hope. I hurried, with staggering feet, to the dead-house.

All the bodies were gone. New ones had come in.

"Where is she?" I cried to the old woman who had charge there. She knew to whom I referred.

"Buried," said she.

I burst out into a torrent of imprecations. "Where have they buried her? Take me to the place!" I cried, as I flung a piece of gold to the woman. She grasped it eagerly. "Bring a spade, and come quick, for God's sake! *She is not dead!*"

How did I have such a mad fancy? I will tell you. This ship-fever often terminates in a sort of stupor, in which death generally takes place. Sometimes, however, the patient who has fallen into this stupor revives again. It is known to the physicians as the "trance state." I had seen cases of this at sea. Several times people were thrown overboard when I thought that they did not have all the signs of death, and at last, in two cases of which I had charge, I detained the corpses three days, in spite of the remonstrances of the other passengers. *These two revived.* By this I knew that some of those who were thrown overboard were not dead. Did I feel horror at this, my Teresa? No. "Pass away," I said, "unhappy ones. You are not dead. You live in a better life than this. What matters it whether you died by the fever or by the sea?"

But when I saw Edith as she lay there my soul felt assured that she was not dead, and an unutterable convulsion of sorrow overwhelmed me. Therefore I fainted. The horror of that situation was too much for me. To think of that angelic girl about to be covered up alive in the ground; to think of that sweet young life, which had begun so brightly, terminating amidst such black darkness!

"Now God help me!" I cried, as I hurried on after the woman; "and bring me there in time." There! Where? To the place of the dead. It was there that I had to seek her.

"How long had she been in that house before I fainted?" I asked, fearfully.

"Twenty-four hours."

"And when did I faint?"

"Yesterday."

A pang shot through me. "Tell me," I cried, hoarsely, "when she was buried."

"Last night."

"O God!" I groaned, and I could say no more; but with new strength given to me in that hour of agony I rushed on.

It was by the eastern shore of the island. A wide flat was there, washed on one side by the river. Here more than a thousand mounds arose. Alas! could I ever hope to find her!

"Do you know where they have laid her?" I asked, tremblingly.

"Yes," said the woman, confidently.

Hope returned faintly. She led the way.

The moon beamed out brightly from behind a cloud, illumining the waste of mounds. The river murmured solemnly along the shore. All my senses were overwhelmed in the madness of that hour. The moon seemed enlarged to the dimensions of a sky; the murmur of the river sounded like a cataract, and in the vast murmur I heard voices which seemed then like the voices of the dead. But the lustre of that exaggerated glow, and the booming concord of fancied spirit-voices were all contemned as trifles. I cared for nothing either natural or supernatural. Only one thought was present—the place where she was laid.

We reached it at last. At the end of a row of graves we stopped. "Here," said the woman, "are twelve graves. These were made last night. These are those twelve which you saw."

"And where—where, O God, is SHE!"

"There," replied the woman, pointing to one which was the third from the end.

"Do not deceive me!" I cried, imploringly. "Are you sure? For I will tear up all these till I find her."

"I am sure, for I was the one who buried her. I and a man—"

I seized the spade and turned up the soil. I labored incessantly for what seemed an endless period. I had thrown out much earth but had not yet reached her. I felt my fitful strength failing me. My mind, too, seemed entering into a state of delirium. At last my knees gave way, and I sank down just as my spade touched something which gave back a hollow sound.

My knees gave way, and I sank down. But I would not give up. I tore up handfuls of earth and threw them into the air.

"Oh, Edith!" I cried, "I am here! I am coming! I am coming!"

"Come, Sir," said the woman, suddenly, in

"I TOOK HER IN MY ARMS AND BROUGHT HER FORTH FROM THE GRAVE," ETC.

her strong voice, yet pityingly. "You can do nothing. I will dig her out in a minute."

"God forever bless you!" I cried, leaping out and giving place to her. I watched her as she threw out the earth. Hungrily I gazed, devouring that dark aperture with my eyes till at last the rough boards appeared.

Then I leaped down. I put my fingers at the edge and tore at it till it gave way. The lid was only fastened with a few nails. My bleeding fingers clutched it. It yielded to my frantic exertions.

O my God! was there ever a sight on earth like that which now met my eyes as I raised the lid and looked below? The moon, which was high in the sky, streamed down directly into the narrow cell. It showed me the one whom I sought. Its bright beams threw a lustre round that face which was upturned toward me. Ah me! how white was that face; like the face of some sleeping maiden carved in alabaster. Bathed in the moonbeams it lay before me, all softened and refined and made pure; a face of unearthly beauty. The dark hair caught the moon's rays, and encircled the head like a crown of immortality. Still the eyes were closed as though in slumber; still the lips were fixed into a smile. She lay as one who had fallen into a deep, sweet sleep—as one who in that sleep has dreams, in which are visions of more than earthly beauty, and scenes of more than mortal happiness.

Now it was with me as though at that unequaled vision I had drawn into my inmost being some sudden stimulus—a certain rapture of newborn strength; strength no longer fitful and spasmodic, but firm, well fortified and well sustained.

I took her in my arms and brought her forth from the grave into the life of earth.

Ah me! how light a thing was that frail and slender figure which had been worn down by the unparalleled suffering through which she had passed. This thought transfixed me with a pang of anguish even awed the rapture that I felt at clasping her in my arms.

But now that I had her, where was I to seek for a place of shelter? I turned to the woman and asked: "Is there any secluded place where she may sleep undisturbed till she wakes—"

"No: there is none but what is crowded with the sick and dying in all this island."

"I must have some place."

"There is only one spot that is quiet."

"What one?"

"The dead-house."

I shuddered. "No, not there. See," said I, and I handed her a piece of gold. "Find me some place and you shall have still more."

"Well," she said, hesitatingly, "I have the room where me and my man live. I suppose we could give up that."

"Take me there, then."

"Shall I help you carry her?"

"No," I answered, drawing back my pure Edith from her outstretched hands. "No, I will carry her."

The woman went on without a word. She led the way back to the low and dismal sheds which Lay there like a vast charnel-house, and thence to a low hut some distance away from all, where she opened a door. She spoke a few words to a man, who finally withdrew. A light was burning. A rude cot was there. Here I laid the one whom I carried.

"Come here," said I, "three times a day. I will pay you well for this."

The woman left. All night long I watched. She lay unmoved and unchanged. Where was her spirit wandering? Soared it among the splendors of some far-off world? Lingered it amidst the sunshine of heavenly glory? Did her seraphic soul move amidst her peers in the assemblage of the holy? Was she straying amidst the trackless paths of ether with those whom she had loved in life, and who had gone before?

All night long I watched her as she lay with her marble face and her changeless smile. There seemed to be communicated to me an influence from her which opened the eyes of my spiritual sense; and my spirit sought to force itself upon her far-off perceptions, that so it might catch her notice and bring her back to earth.

The morning dawned. There was no change. Mid-day came, and still there was no change. I know not how it was, but the superintendent had heard about the grave being opened, and found me in the hut. He tried to induce me to give back to the grave the one whom I had rescued. The horror of that request was so tremendous that it forced me into passionless calm. When I refused he threatened. At his menace I rejoined in such language that he turned pale.

"Murderer!" said I, sternly, "is it not enough that you have sent to the grave many wretches who were not dead? Do you seek to send back to death this single one whom I have rescued? Do you want all Canada and all the world to ring with the account of the horrors done here, where people are buried alive? See, she is not dead. She is only sleeping. And yet you put her in the grave."

"She is dead!" he cried, in mingled fear and anger—"and she must be buried."

"She is not dead," said I, sternly, as I glared on him out of my intensity of anguish—"she is not dead; and if you try to send her to death again you must first send me. She shall not pass to the grave except over my corpse, and over the corpse of the first murderer that dares to lay hands on her."

He started back—he and those who were with him. "The man is mad," they said.

They left me in peace. I grow excited as I write. My hand trembles. Let me be calm.

She awoke that night. It was midnight, and all was still. She opened her eyes suddenly, and looked full at me with an earnest and steadfast stare. At last a long, deep-drawn sigh broke the stillness of that lone chamber.

"Back again"—she murmured, in a scarce audible voice—"among men, and to earth. O friends of the Realm of Light, must I be severed from your lofty communion!"

As she spoke thus the anguish which I had felt at the grave was renewed. "You have brought me back," said she, mournfully.

"No," I returned, sadly—"not I. It was not God's will that you should leave this life. He did not send death to you. You were sleeping, and I brought you to this place."

"I know all," she murmured, closing her eyes. "I heard all while my spirit was away. I know where you found me."

"I am weary," she said, after a silence. Her eyes closed again. But this time the trance was broken. She slept with long, deep breathing, interrupted by frequent sighs. I watched her through the long night. At first fever came. Then it passed. Her sleep became calm, and she slumbered like a weary child.

Early in the morning the superintendent came, followed by a dozen armed men. He entered with a frown. I met him with my hand upraised to hush him, and led him gently to the bedside.

"See," I whispered—"but for me she would have been BURIED ALIVE!"

The man seemed frozen into dumbness. He stood ghastly white with horror, thick drops started from his forehead, his teeth chattered, he staggered away. He looked at me with a haunted face, such as belongs to one who thinks he has seen a spirit.

"Spare me," he faltered; "do not ruin me. God knows I have tried to do my best!"

I waved him off. "Leave me. You have nothing to fear." He turned away with his white face, and departed in silence with his men.

After a long sleep Edith waked again. She said nothing. I did not wish her to speak. She lay awake, yet with closed eyes, thinking such thoughts as belong to one, and to one alone, who had known what she had known.

I did not speak to her, for she was to me a holy being, not to be addressed lightly. Yet she did not refuse nourishment, and grew stronger, until at last I was able to have her moved to Quebec. There I obtained proper accommodations for her and good nurses.

I have told you what she was before this. Subsequently there came a change. The nurses and the doctors called it a stupor.

There was something in her face which inspired awe among all who saw her. If it is the soul of man that gives expression to the features, then her soul must have been familiar with things unknown to us. How often have I seen her in walking across the room stop suddenly and stand fixed on the spot, musing and sad! She commonly moved about as though she saw nothing, as though she walked in a dream, with eyes half closed, and sometimes murmuring inaudible words. The nurses half loved and half feared her. Yet there were some little children in the house who felt all love and no fear, for I have seen her smiling on them with a smile so sweet that it seemed to me as if they stood in the presence of their guardian angel. Strange, sad spirit, what thoughts, what memories are these which make her life one long reverie, and have taken

from her all power to enjoy the beautiful that dwells on earth!

She fills all my thoughts with her loneliness, her tears, and that spiritual face, bearing the marks of scenes that can never be forgotten. She lives and moves amidst her recollections. What is it that so overwhelms all her thoughts? That face of hers appears as though it had bathed itself in the atmosphere of some diviner world than this; and her eyes seem as if they may have gazed upon the Infinite Mystery.

Now from the few words which she has casually dropped I gather this to be her own belief. That when she fell into the state of trance her soul was parted from her body, though still by an inexplicable sympathy she was aware of what was passing around her lifeless form. Yet her soul had gone forth into that spiritual world toward which we look from this earth with such eager wonder. It had mingled there with the souls of others. It had put forth new powers, and learned the use of new faculties. Then that soul was called back to its body.

This maiden—this wonder among mortals—is not a mortal, she is an exiled soul. I have seen her sit with tears streaming down her face, tears such as men shed in exile. For she is like a banished man who has only one feeling, a longing, yearning homesickness. She has been once in that radiant world for a time which we call three days in our human calculations, but which to her seems infinite; for as she once said—and it is a pregnant thought, full of meaning—there is no time there, all is infinite duration. The soul has illimitable powers; in an instant it can live years, and she in those three days had the life of ages. Her former life on earth has now but a faint hold upon her memory in comparison with that life among the stars. The sorrow that her loved ones endured has become eclipsed by the knowledge of the blessedness in which she found them.

Alas! it is a blessing to die, and it is only a curse to rise from the dead. And now she endures this exile with an aching heart, with memories that are irrepressible, with longings unutterable, and yearnings that can not be expressed for that starry world and that bright companionship from which she has been recalled. So she sometimes speaks. And little else can she say amidst her tears. Oh, sublime and mysterious exile, could I but know what you know, and have but a small part of that secret which you can not explain!

For she can not tell what she witnessed *there*. She sometimes wishes to do so, but can not. When asked directly, she sinks into herself and is lost in thought. She finds no words. It is as when we try to explain to a man who has been always blind the scenes before our eyes. We can not explain them to such a man. And so with her. She finds in her memory things which no human language has been made to express. These languages were made for the earth, not for heaven. In order to tell me what she knows, she would need the language of that world, and then she could not explain it, for I could not understand it.

Only once I saw her smile, and that was when one of the nurses casually mentioned, with horror, the death of some acquaintance. "Death!" she murmured, and her eyes lighted up with a kind of ecstasy. "Oh, that I might die!" She knows no blessing on earth except that which we consider a curse, and to her the object of all her wishes is this one thing—Death. I shall not soon forget that smile. It seemed of itself to give a new meaning to death.

Do I believe this, so wild a theory, the very mention of which has carried me beyond myself? I do not know. All my reason rebels. It scouts the monstrous idea. But here she stands before me, with her memories and thoughts, and her wonderful words, few, but full of deepest meaning—words which I shall never forget—and I recognize something before which Reason falters. Whence this deep longing of hers? Why when she thinks of death does her face grow thus radiant, and her eyes kindle with hope? Why does she so pine and grow sick with desire? Why does her heart thus ache as day succeeds to day, and she finds herself still under the sunlight, with the landscapes and the music of this fair earth still around her?

Once, in some speculations of mine, which I think I mentioned to you, Teresina, I thought that if a man could reach that spiritual world he would look with contempt upon the highest charms that belong to this. Here is one who believes that she has gone through this experience, and all this earth, with all its beauty, is now an object of indifference to her. Perhaps you may ask, Is she sane? Yes, dear, as sane as I am, but with a profounder experience and a diviner knowledge.

After I had been in Quebec about a month I learned that one of the regiments stationed here was commanded by Colonel Henry Despard. I called on him, and he received me with unbounded delight. He made me tell him all about myself, and I imparted to him as much of the events of the voyage and quarantine as was advisable. I did not go into particulars to any extent, of course. I mentioned nothing about *the grave*. That, dearest sister, is a secret between you, and me, and her. For if it should be possible that she should ever be restored to ordinary human sympathy and feeling, it will not be well that all the world should know what has happened to her.

His regiment was ordered to Halifax, and I concluded to comply with his urgent solicitations and accompany him. It is better for *her* at any rate that there should be more friends than one to protect her. Despard, like the doctors, supposes that she is in a stupor.

The journey here exercised a favorable influence over her. Her strength increased to a marked degree, and she has once or twice spoken about the past. She told me that her father wrote to his son Louis in Australia some weeks before his death, and urged him to come home. She thinks that he is on his way to England. The Colonel and I at once thought that he ought to be sought after without delay, and he promised to write to his nephew, your old playmate, who, he tells me, is to be a neighbor of yours.

If he is still the one whom I remember—intellectual yet spiritual, with sound reason, yet a strong heart, if he is still the Courtenay Despard who, when a boy, seemed to me to look out upon the world before him with such lofty poetic enthusiasm—then, Teresella, you should show him this diary, for it will cause him to understand

things which he ought to know. I suppose it would be unintelligible to Mr. Thornton, who is a most estimable man, but who, from the nature of his mind, if he read this, would only conclude that the writer was insane.

At any rate, Mr. Thornton should be informed of the leading facts, so that he may see if something can be done to alleviate the distress, or to avenge the wrongs of one whose father was the earliest benefactor of his family.

CHAPTER XVI.

HUSBAND AND WIFE.

"It is now the middle of February," said Despard, after a long pause, in which he had given himself up to the strange reflections which the diary was calculated to excite. "If Louis Brandon left Australia when he was called he must be in England now."

"You are calm," said Mrs. Thornton. "Have you nothing more to say than that?"

Despard looked at her earnestly. "Do you ask me such a question? It is a story so full of anguish that the heart might break out of pure sympathy, but what words could be found? I have nothing to say. I am speechless. My God! what horror thou dost permit!"

"But something must be done," said Mrs. Thornton, impetuously.

"Yes," said Despard, slowly, "but what? If we could reach our hands over the grave and bring back those who have passed away, then the soul of Edith might find peace; but now—now—we can give her no peace. She only wishes to die. Yet something must be done, and the first thing is to find Louis Brandon. I will start for London to-night. I will go and seek him, not for Edith's sake but for his own, that I may save one at least of this family. For her there is no comfort. Our efforts are useless there. If we could give her the greatest earthly happiness it would be poor and mean, and still she would sigh after that starry companionship from which her soul has been withdrawn."

"Then you believe it."

"Don't you?"

"Of course; but I did not know that you would."

"Why not? and if I did not believe it this at least would be plain, that she herself believes it. And even if it be a hallucination, it is a sublime one, and so vivid that it is the same to her as a reality. Let it be only a dream that has taken place—still that dream has made all other things dim, indistinct, and indifferent to her."

"No one but you would read Paolo's diary without thinking him insane."

Despard smiled. "Even that would be nothing to me. Some people think that a great genius must be insane.

'Great wits are sure to madness near allied,'

you know. For my part, I consider Paolo the sublimest of men. When I saw him last I was only a boy, and he came with his seraphic face and his divine music to give me an inspiration which has biased my life ever since. I have only known one spirit like his among those whom I have met."

An indescribable sadness passed over his face. "But now," he continued, suddenly, "I suppose Thornton must see my uncle's letter. His legal mind may discern some things which the law may do in this case. Edith is beyond all consolation from human beings, and still farther beyond all help from English law. But if Louis Brandon can be found the law may exert itself in his favor. In this respect he may be useful, and I have no doubt he would take up the case earnestly, out of his strong sense of justice."

When Thornton came in to dinner Despard handed him his uncle's letter. The lawyer read it with deep attention, and without a word.

Mrs. Thornton looked agitated—sometimes resting her head on her hand, at others looking fixedly at her husband. As soon as he had finished she said, in a calm, measured tone:

"I did not know before that Brandon of Brandon Hall and all his family had perished so miserably."

Thornton started, and looked at her earnestly. She returned his gaze with unutterable sadness in her eyes.

"He saved my father's life," said she. "He benefited him greatly. Your father also was under slight obligations to him. I thought that things like these constituted a faint claim, on one's gratitude, so that if one were exposed to misfortune he might not be altogether destitute of friends."

Thornton looked uneasy as his wife spoke.

"My dear," said he, "you do not understand."

"True," she answered; "for this thing is almost incredible. If my father's friend has died in misery, unpitied and unwept, forsaken by all, do I not share the guilt of ingratitude? How can I absolve myself from blame?"

"Set your mind at rest. You never knew any thing about it. I told you nothing on the subject."

"Then you knew it!"

"Stop! You can not understand this unless I explain it. You are stating bald facts; but these facts, painful as they are, are very much modified by circumstances."

"Well, then, I hope you will tell me all, without reserve, for I wish to know how it is that this horror has happened, and I have stood idly and coldly aloof. My God!" she cried, in Italian; "did *he* not—did *they* not in their last moments think of me, and wonder how they could have been betrayed by Langhetti's daughter!"

"My dear, be calm, I pray. You are blaming yourself unjustly, I assure you."

Despard was ghastly pale as this conversation went on. He turned his face away.

"Ralph Brandon," began Thornton, "was a man of many high qualities, but of unbounded pride, and utterly impracticable. He was no judge of character, and therefore was easily deceived. He was utterly inexperienced in business, and he was always liable to be led astray by any sudden impulse. Somehow or other a man named Potts excited his interest about twelve or fifteen years ago. He was a mere vulgar adventurer; but Brandon became infatuated with him, and actually believed that this man was worthy to be intrusted with the management of large business transactions. The thing went on for years. His friends all remonstrated with him. I, in particular, went there to explain to him that

the speculation in which he was engaged could not result in any thing except loss. But he resented all interference, and I had to leave him to himself.

"His son Louis was a boy full of energy and fire. The family were all indignant at the confidence which Ralph Brandon put in this Potts—Louis most of all. One day he met Potts. Words passed between them, and Louis struck the scoundrel. Potts complained. Brandon had his son up on the spot; and after listening to his explanations gave him the alternative either to apologize to Potts or to leave the house forever. Louis indignantly denounced Potts to his father as a swindler. Brandon ordered him to his room, and gave him a week to decide.

"The servants whispered till the matter was noised abroad. The county gentry had a meeting about it, and felt so strongly that they did an unparalleled thing. They actually waited on him to assure him that Potts was unworthy of trust, and to urge him not to treat his son so harshly. All Brandon's pride was roused at this. He said words to the deputation which cut him off forever from their sympathy, and they left in a rage. Mrs. Brandon wrote to me, and I went there. I found Brandon inflexible. I urged him to give his son a longer time, to send him to the army for a while, to do any thing rather than eject him. He refused to change his sentence. Then I pointed out the character of Potts, and told him many things that I had heard. At this he hinted that I wished to have the management of his business, and was actuated by mercenary motives. Of course, after this insult, nothing more was to be said. I went home and tried to forget all about the Brandons. At the end of the week Louis refused to apologize, and left his father forever."

"Did you see Louis?"

"I saw him before that insult to ask if he would apologize."

"Did you try to make him apologize?" asked Mrs. Thornton, coldly.

"Yes. But he looked at me with such an air that I had to apologize myself for hinting at such a thing. He was as inflexible as his father."

"How else could he have been?"

"Well, each might have yielded a little. It does not do to be so inflexible if one would succeed in life."

"No," said Mrs. Thornton. "Success must be gained by flexibility. The martyrs were all inflexible, and they were all unsuccessful."

Thornton looked at his wife hastily. Despard's hand trembled, and his face grew paler still with a more livid pallor.

"Did you try to do any thing for the ruined son?"

"How could I, after that insult?"

"Could you not have got him a government office, or purchased a commission for him in the army?"

"He would not have taken it from me."

"You could have co-operated with his mother, and done it in her name."

"I could not enter the house after being insulted."

"You could have written. From what I have heard of Brandon, he was just the man who would have blessed any one who would interpose to save his son."

"His son did not wish to be saved. He has all his father's inflexibility, but an intellect as clear as that of the most practical man. He has a will of iron, dauntless resolution, and an implacable temper. At the same time he has the open generosity and the tender heart of his father."

"Had his father a tender heart?"

"So tender and affectionate that this sacrifice of his son must have overwhelmed him with the deepest sorrow."

"Did you ever after make any advances to any of them?"

"No, never. I never went near the house."

"Did you ever visit any of the county gentry to see if something could be done?"

"No. It would have been useless. Besides, the very mention of his name would have been resented. I should have had to fling myself headlong against the feelings of the whole public. And no man has any right to do that."

"No," said Mrs. Thornton. "No man has. That was another mistake that the martyrs made. They would fling themselves against public opinion."

"All men can not be martyrs. Besides, the cases are not analogous."

Thornton spoke calmly and dispassionately.

"True. It is absurd in me; but I admire one who has for a moment forgotten his own interests or safety in thinking of others."

"That does very well for poetry, but not in real life."

"In *real life*, such as that on board the *Tecumseh?*" murmured Mrs. Thornton, with drooping eyelids.

"You are getting excited, my dear," said Thornton, patiently, with the air of a wise father who overlooks the petulance of his child. "I will go on. I had business on the Continent when poor Brandon's ruin occurred. You were with me, my dear, at Berlin when I heard about it. I felt shocked, but not surprised. I feared that it would come to that."

"You showed no emotion in particular."

"No; I was careful not to trouble you."

"You were in Berlin three months. Was it at the beginning or end of your stay?"

"At the beginning."

"And you staid?"

"I had business which I could not leave."

"Would you have been ruined if you had left?"

"Well, no—not exactly ruined, but it would have entailed serious consequences."

"Would those consequences have been as serious as the *Tecumseh* tragedy?"

"My dear, in business there are rules which a man is not permitted to neglect. There are duties and obligations which are imperative. The code of honor there is as delicate, yet as rigid, as elsewhere."

"And yet there are times when all obligations of this sort are weakened. When friends die, this is recognized. Why should it not be so when they are in danger of a fate worse than death?"

Thornton elevated his eyebrows, and made no reply.

"You must have heard about it in March, then?"

"Yes, at the end of January. His ruin took place in December, 1845. It was the middle of

"THEN, COVE

May before I g
end of the month
lage to make in
the death of Bra
family to parts un
"Did he make
"No."
"And you said
"I was afraid
"And therefore
ending self-reproa
"Why so? Su
without a shadow
"I will tell you
essarily on the subj
a fact that Brandon
public careless abou
strangely enough, t
my own comfort
owes as much as I,
of his, was sailing
his own yacht, ma
country at every p
land, and at last th
intention of examin
This was in 1818,
My father was stop

"THEN, COVERING HER FACE WITH HER HANDS, SHE BURST INTO AN AGONY OF TEARS."

May before I got home. I then, toward the end of the month, sent my clerk to Brandon village to make inquiries. He brought word of the death of Brandon, and the departure of his family to parts unknown."

"Did he make no particular inquiries?"

"No."

"And you said not a word to me!"

"I was afraid of agitating you, my dear."

"And therefore you have secured for me unending self-reproach."

"Why so? Surely you are blaming yourself without a shadow of a cause."

"I will tell you why. I dare say I feel unnecessarily on the subject, but I can not help it. It is a fact that Brandon was always impulsive and culpably careless about himself. It is to this quality, strangely enough, that I owe my father's life, and my own comfort for many years. Paolo also owes as much as I. Mr. Brandon, with a friend of his, was sailing through the Mediterranean in his own yacht, making occasional tours into the country at every place where they happened to land, and at last they came to Girgenti, with the intention of examining the ruins of Agrigentum. This was in 1818, four years before I was born. My father was stopping at Girgenti, with his wife and Paolo, who was then six years old. My father had been very active under the reign of Murat, and had held a high post in his government. This made him suspected after Murat's overthrow.

"On the day that these Englishmen visited Girgenti, a woman in deep distress came to see them, along with a little boy. It was my mother and Paolo. She flung herself on the floor at their feet, and prayed them to try and help her husband, who had been arrested on a charge of treason and was now in prison. He was suspected of belonging to the Carbonari, who were just beginning to resume their secret plots, and were showing great activity. My father belonged to the innermost degree, and had been betrayed by a villain named Cigole. My mother did not tell them all this, but merely informed them of his danger.

"At first they did not know what to do, but the prayers of my mother moved their hearts. They went to see the captain of the guard, and tried to bribe him, but without effect. They found out, however, where my father was confined, and resolved upon a desperate plan. They put my mother and Paolo on board of the yacht, and by paying a heavy bribe obtained permis-

sion to visit my father in prison. Brandon's friend was about the same height as my father. When they reached his cell they urged my father to exchange clothes with him and escape. At first he positively refused, but when assured that Brandon's friend, being an Englishman, would be set free in a few days, he consented. Brandon then took him away unnoticed, put him on board of the yacht, and sailed to Marseilles, where he gave him money enough to get to England, and told him to stop at Brandon Hall till he himself arrived. He then sailed back to see about his friend.

"He found out nothing about him for some time. At last he induced the British embassador to take the matter in hand, and he did so with such effect that the prisoner was liberated. He had been treated with some severity at first, but he was young, and the government was persuaded to look upon it as a youthful freak. Brandon's powerful influence with the British embassador obtained his unconditional release.

"My father afterward obtained a situation here at Holby, where he was organist till he died. Through all his life he never ceased to receive kindness and delicate acts of attention from Brandon. When in his last sickness Brandon came and staid with him till the end. He then wished to do something for Paolo, but Paolo preferred seeking his own fortune in his own way."

Mrs. Thornton ended her little narrative, to which Despard had listened with the deepest attention.

"Who was Brandon's friend?" asked Despard.

"He was a British officer," said Mrs. Thornton. "For fear of dragging in his government, and perhaps incurring dismissal from the army, he gave an assumed name—Mountjoy. This was the reason why Brandon was so long in finding him."

"Did your father not know it?"

"On the passage Brandon kept it secret, and after his friend's deliverance he came to see my father under his assumed name. My father always spoke of him as Mountjoy. After a time he heard that he was dead."

"I can tell you his true name," said Mr. Thornton. "There is no reason why you should not know it."

"What?"

"Lionel Despard—your father, and Ralph Brandon's bosom friend."

Despard looked transfixed. Mrs. Thornton gazed at her husband, and gave an unutterable look at Despard, then, covering her face with her hands, she burst into an agony of tears.

"My God," cried Despard, passing his hand over his forehead, "my father died when I was a child, and nobody was ever able to tell me any thing about him. And Brandon was his friend. He died thus, and his family have perished thus, while I have known nothing and done nothing."

"You at least are not to blame," said Thornton, calmly, "for you had scarcely heard of Brandon's name. You were in the north of England when this happened, and knew nothing whatever about it."

That evening Despard went home with a deeper trouble in his heart. He was not seen at the Grange for a month. At the end of that time he returned. He had been away to London during the whole interval.

As Mrs. Thornton entered to greet him her whole face was overspread with an expression of radiant joy. He took both her hands in his and pressed them without a word. "Welcome back," she murmured—"you have been gone a long time."

"Nothing but an overpowering sense of duty could have kept me away so long," said he, in a deep, low voice.

A few similar commonplaces followed; but with these two the tone of the voice invested the feeblest commonplaces with some hidden meaning.

At last she asked: "Tell me what success you had?" He made no reply; but taking a paper from his pocket opened it, and pointed to a marked paragraph. This was the month of March. The paper was dated January 14, 1847. The paragraph was as follows:

"Distressing Casualty.—The ship *Java*, which left Sydney on the 5th of August last, reports a stormy passage. On the 12th of September a distressing casualty occurred. They were in S. lat. 11° 1′ 22″, E. long. 105° 6′ 36″, when a squall suddenly struck the ship. A passenger, Louis Brandon, Esq., of the firm of Compton & Brandon, Sydney, was standing by the lee-quarter as the squall struck, and, distressing to narrate, he was hurled violently overboard. It was impossible to do any thing, as a monsoon was beginning, which raged for twenty-four hours. Mr. Brandon was coming to England on business.

"The captain reports a sand-bank in the latitude and longitude indicated above, which he names 'Coffin Island,' from a rock of peculiar shape at the eastern extremity. Ships will do well in future to give this place a wide berth."

Deep despondency came over Mrs. Thornton's face as she read this. "We can do nothing," said she, mournfully. "He is gone. It is better for him. We must now wait till we hear more from Paolo. I will write to him at once."

"And I will write to my uncle."

There was a long silence. "Do you know," said Despard, finally, "that I have been thinking much about my father of late. It seems very strange to me that my uncle never told me about that Sicilian affair before. Perhaps he did not wish me to know it, for fear that through all my life I should brood over thoughts of that noble heart lost to me forever. But I intend to write to him, and obtain afresh the particulars of his death. I wish to know more about my mother. No one was ever in such ignorance of his parents as I have been. They merely told me that my father and mother died suddenly in India, and left me an orphan at the age of seven under the care of Mr. Henry Thornton. They never told me that Brandon was a very dear friend of his. I have thought also of the circumstances of his death, and they all seem confused. Some say he died in Calcutta, others say in China, and Mr. Thornton once said in Manilla. There is some mystery about it."

"When Brandon was visiting my father," said Mrs. Thornton, "you were at school, and he never saw you. I think he thought you were Henry Despard's son."

"There's some mystery about it," said Despard, thoughtfully.

When Mr. Thornton came in that night he read a few extracts from the London paper which he had just received. One was as follows:

"FOUNDERED AT SEA.—The ship *H. B. Smith*, from Calcutta, which arrived yesterday, reports that on the 28th January they picked up a ship's long-boat near the Cape Verd Islands. It was floating bottom upward. On the stern was painted the word *Falcon*. The ship *Falcon* has now been expected for two months, and it is feared from this that she may have foundered at sea. The *Falcon* was on her way from Sydney to London, and belonged to Messrs. Ringwood, Flaxman, & Co."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SHADOW OF THE AFRICAN FOREST.

LET us return to the castaways.

It was morning on the coast of Africa—Africa the mysterious, the inhospitable Africa, *leonum arida nutrix*.

There was a little harbor into which flowed a shallow, sluggish river, while on each side rose high hills. In front of the harbor was an island which concealed and protected it.

Here the palm-trees grew. The sides rose steeply, the summit was lofty, and the towering palms afforded a deep, dense shade. The grass was fine and short, and being protected from the withering heat was as fine as that of an English lawn. Up the palm-trees there climbed a thousand parasitic plants, covered with blossoms—gorgeous, golden, rich beyond all description. Birds of starry plumage flitted through the air, as they leaped from tree to tree, uttering a short, wild note; through the spreading branches sighed the murmuring breeze that came from off the ocean; round the shore the low tones of the gently-washing surf were borne as it came in in faint undulations from the outer sea.

Underneath the deepest shadow of the palms lay Brandon. He had lost consciousness when he fell from the boat; and now for the first time he opened his eyes and looked around upon the scene, seeing these sights and hearing the murmuring sounds.

In front of him stood Beatrice, looking with drooped eyelids at the grass, her arms half folded before her, her head uncovered, her hair bound by a sort of fillet around the crown, and then gathered in great black curling masses behind. Her face was pale as usual, and had the same marble whiteness which always marked it. That face was now pensive and sad; but there was no weakness there. Its whole expression showed manifestly the self-contained soul, the strong spirit evenly-poised, willing and able to endure.

Brandon raised himself on one arm and looked wonderingly around. She started. A vivid flash of joy spread over her face in one bright smile. She hurried up and knelt down by him.

"Do not move—you are weak," she said, as tenderly as a mother to a sick child.

Brandon looked at her fixedly for a long time without speaking. She placed her cool hand on his forehead. His eyes closed as though there were a magnetic power in her touch. After a while, as she removed her hand, he opened his eyes again. He took her hand and held it fervently to his lips. "I know," said he, in a low, dreamy voice, "who you are, and who I am—but nothing more. I know that I have lost all memory; that there has been some past life of great sorrow; but I can not think what that sorrow is—I know that there has been some misfortune, but I can not remember what."

Beatrice smiled sadly. "It will all come to you in time."

"At first when I waked," he murmured, "and looked around on this scene, I thought that I had at last entered the spirit-world, and that you had come with me; and I felt a deep joy that I can never express. But I see, and I know now, that I am yet on the earth. Though what shore of all the earth this is, or how I got here, I know not."

"You must sleep," said she, gently.

"And you—you—you," he murmured, with indescribable intensity—"you, companion, preserver, guardian angel—I feel as though, if I were not a man, I could weep my life out at your feet."

"Do not weep," said she, calmly. "The time for tears may yet come; but it is not now."

He looked at her, long, earnestly, and inquiringly, still holding her hand, which he had pressed to his lips. An unutterable longing to ask something was evident; but it was checked by a painful embarrassment.

"I know nothing but this," said he at last, "that I have felt as though sailing for years over infinite seas. Wave after wave has been impelling us on. A Hindu servant guided the boat. But I lay weak, with my head supported by you, and your arms around me. Yet, of all the days and all the years that ever I have known, these were supreme, for all the time was one long ecstasy. And now, if there is sorrow before me," he concluded, "I will meet it resignedly, for I have had my heaven already."

"You have sailed over seas," said she, sadly; "but I was the helpless one, and you saved me from death."

"And are you—to me—what I thought?" he asked, with painful vehemence and imploring eyes.

"I am your nurse," said she, with a melancholy smile.

He sighed heavily. "Sleep now," said she, and she again placed her hand upon his forehead. Her touch soothed him. Her voice arose in a low song of surpassing sweetness. His senses yielded to the subtle incantation, and sleep came to him as he lay.

When he awaked it was almost evening. Lethargy was still over him, and Beatrice made him sleep again. He slept into the next day. On waking there was the same absence of memory. She gave him some cordial to drink, and the draught revived him. Now he was far stronger, and he sat up, leaning against a tree, while Beatrice knelt near him. He looked at her long and earnestly.

"I would wish never to leave this place, but to stay here," said he. "I know nothing of my past life. I have drunk of Lethe. Yet I can not help struggling to regain knowledge of that past."

He put his hand in his bosom, as if feeling for some relic.

"I have something suspended about my neck,"

said he, "which is precious. Perhaps I shall know what it is after a time."

Then, after a pause, "Was there not a wreck?" he asked.

"Yes; and you saved my life."

"Was there not a fight with pirates?"

"Yes; and you saved my life," said Beatrice again.

"I begin to remember," said Brandon. "How long is it since the wreck took place?"

"It was January 15."

"And what is this?"

"February 6. It is about three weeks."

"How did I get away?"

"In a boat with me and the servant."

"Where is the servant?"

"Away providing for us. You had a sunstroke. He carried you up here."

"How long have I been in this place?"

"A fortnight."

Numerous questions followed. Brandon's memory began to return. Yet, in his efforts to regain knowledge of himself, Beatrice was still the most prominent object in his thoughts. His dream-life persisted in mingling itself with his real life.

"But you," he cried, earnestly—"you, how have you endured all this? You are weary; you have worn yourself out for me. What can I ever do to show my gratitude? You have watched me night and day. Will you not have more care of your own life?"

The eyes of Beatrice kindled with a soft light. "What is my life?" said she. "Do I not owe it over and over again to you? But I deny that I am worn out."

Brandon looked at her with earnest, longing eyes.

His recovery was rapid. In a few days he was able to go about. Cato procured fish from the waters and game from the woods, so as to save the provisions of the boat, and they looked forward to the time when they might resume their journey. But to Brandon this thought was repugnant, and an hourly struggle now went on within him. Why should he go to England? What could he do? Why should he ever part from her?

"Oh, to burst all links of habit, and to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day!"

In her presence he might find peace, and perpetual rapture in her smile.

In the midst of such meditations as these her voice once arose from afar. It was one of her own songs, such as she could improvise. It spoke of summer isles amidst the sea; of soft winds and spicy breezes; of eternal rest beneath overshadowing palms. It was a soft, melting strain—a strain of enchantment, sung by one who felt the intoxication of the scene, and whose genius imparted it to others. He was like Ulysses listening to the song of the sirens. It seemed to him as though all nature there joined in that marvelous strain. It was to him as though the very winds were lulled into calm, and a delicious languor stole upon all his senses.

"Sweet, sweet, sweet, god Pan,
Sweet in the fields by the river,
Blinding sweet, oh great god Pan,
The sun on the hills forgot to die,
And the lily revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream by the river."

It was the *μελίγηρυν ὄπά*, the *ὄπα κάλλιμον* of the sirens.

For she had that divine voice which of itself can charm the soul; but, in addition, she had that poetic genius which of itself could give words which the music might clothe.

Now, as he saw her at a distance through the trees and marked the statuesque calm of her classic face, as she stood there, seeming in her song rather to soliloquize than to sing, breathing forth her music "in profuse strains of unpremeditated art," the very beauty of the singer and the very sweetness of the song put an end to all temptation.

"This is folly," he thought. "Could one like that assent to my wild fancy? Would she, with her genius, give up her life to me? No; that divine music must be heard by larger numbers. She is one who thinks she can interpret the inspiration of Mozart and Handel. And who am I?"

Then there came amidst this music a still small voice, like the voice of those helpless ones at home; and this voice seemed one of entreaty and of despair. So the temptation passed. But it passed only to be renewed again. As for Beatrice, she seemed conscious of no such effect as this. Calmly and serenely she bore herself, singing as she thought, as the birds sing, because she could not help it. Here she was like one of the classic nymphs—like the genius of the spot—like Calypso, only passionless.

Now, the more Brandon felt the power of her presence the more he took refuge within himself, avoiding all dangerous topics, speaking only of external things, calling upon her to sing of loftier themes, such as those "*cieli immensi*" of which she had sung when he first heard her. Thus he fought down the struggles of his own heart, and crushed out those rising impulses which threatened to sweep him helplessly away.

As for Beatrice herself she seemed changeless, moved by no passion and swayed by no impulse. Was she altogether passionless, or was this her matchless self-control? Brandon thought that it was her nature, and that she, like her master Langhetti, found in music that which satisfied all passion and all desire.

In about a fortnight after his recovery from his stupor they were ready to leave. The provisions in the boat were enough for two weeks' sail. Water was put on board, and they bade adieu to the island which had sheltered them.

This time Beatrice would not let Brandon row while the sun was up. They rowed at night, and by day tried to get under the shadow of the shore. At last a wind sprang up; they now sailed along swiftly for two or three days. At the end of that time they saw European houses, beyond which arose some roofs and spires. It was Sierra Leone. Brandon's conjectures had been right. On landing here Brandon simply said that they had been wrecked in the *Falcon*, and had escaped on the boat, all the rest having perished. He gave his name as Wheeler. The authorities received these unfortunate ones with great kindness, and Brandon heard that a ship would leave for England on the 6th of March.

The close connection which had existed between them for so many weeks was now severed, and Brandon thought that this might perhaps remove that extraordinary power which he

felt that she exerted over him. Not so. In her absence he found himself constantly looking forward toward a meeting with her again. When with her he found the joy that flowed from her presence to be more intense, since it was more concentrated. He began to feel alarmed at his own weakness.

The 6th of March came, and they left in the ship *Juno* for London.

Now their intercourse was like that of the old days on board the *Falcon*.

"It is like the *Falcon*," said Beatrice, on the first evening. "Let us forget all about the journey over the sea, and our stay on the island."

"I can never forget that I owe my life to you," said Brandon, vehemently.

"And I," rejoined Beatrice, with kindling eyes, which yet were softened by a certain emotion of indescribable tenderness—"I—how can I forget! Twice you saved me from a fearful death, and then you toiled to save my life till your own sank under it."

"I would gladly give up a thousand lives"—said Brandon, in a low voice, while his eyes were illumined with a passion which had never before been permitted to get beyond control, but now rose visibly, and irresistibly.

"If you have a life to give," said Beatrice, calmly, returning his fevered gaze with a full look of tender sympathy—"if you have a life to give, let it be given to that *purpose* of yours to which you are devoted."

"You refuse it, then!" cried Brandon, vehemently and reproachfully.

Beatrice returned his reproachful gaze with one equally reproachful, and raising her calm eyes to Heaven, said, in a tremulous voice,

"You have no right to say so—least of all to me. I said what you feel and know; and it is this, that others require your life, in comparison with whom I am nothing. Ah, my friend," she continued, in tones of unutterable sadness, "let us be friends here at least, on the sea, for when we reach England we must be separated for evermore!"

"For evermore!" cried Brandon, in agony.

"For evermore!" repeated Beatrice, in equal anguish.

"Do you feel very eager to get to England?" asked Brandon, after a long silence.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I know that there is sorrow for me there."

"If our boat had been destroyed on the shore of that island," he asked, in almost an imploring voice, "would you have grieved?"

"No."

"The present is better than the future. Oh that my dream had continued forever, and that I had never awaked to the bitterness of life!"

"That," said Beatrice, with a mournful smile, "is a reproach to me for watching you."

"Yet that moment of awaking was sweet beyond all thought," continued Brandon, in a musing tone, "for I had lost all memory of all things except you."

They stood in silence, sometimes looking at one another, sometimes at the sea, while the dark shadows of the Future swept gloomily before their eyes.

The voyage passed on until at last the English shores were seen, and they sailed up the Channel amidst the thronging ships that pass to and fro from the metropolis of the world.

"To-morrow we part," said Beatrice, as she stood with Brandon on the quarter-deck.

"No," said Brandon; "there will be no one to meet you here. I must take you to your home."

"To my home! You?" cried Beatrice, starting back. "You dare not."

"I dare."

"Do you know what it is?"

"I do not seek to know. I do not ask; but yet I think I know."

"And yet *you* offer to go?"

"I must go. I must see you to the very last."

"Be it so," said Beatrice, in a solemn voice, "since it is the very last."

Suddenly she looked at him with the solemn gaze of one whose soul was filled with thoughts that overpowered every common feeling. It was a glance lofty and serene and unimpassioned, like that of some spirit which has passed beyond human cares, but sad as that of some prophet of woe.

"Louis Brandon!"

At this mention of his name a flash of unspeakable surprise passed over Brandon's face. She held out her hand. "Take my hand," said she, calmly, "and hold it so that I may have strength to speak."

"Louis Brandon!" said she, "there was a time on that African island when you lay under the trees and I was sure that you were dead. There was no beating to your heart, and no perceptible breath. The last test failed, the last hope left me, and I knelt by your head, and took you in my arms, and wept in my despair. At your feet Cato knelt and mourned in his Hindu fashion. Then mechanically and hopelessly he made a last trial to see if you were really dead, so that he might prepare your grave. He put his hand under your clothes against your heart. He held it there for a long time. Your heart gave no answer. He withdrew it, and in doing so took something away that was suspended about your neck. This was a metallic case and a package wrapped in oiled silk. He gave them to me."

Beatrice had spoken with a sad, measured tone—such a tone as one sometimes uses in prayer—a passionless monotone, without agitation and without shame.

Brandon answered not a word.

"Take my hand," she said, "or I can not go through. This only can give me strength."

He clasped it tightly in both of his. She drew a long breath, and continued:

"I thought you dead, and knew the full measure of despair. Now, when these were given me, I wished to know the secret of the man who had twice rescued me from death, and finally laid down his life for my sake. I did it not through curiosity. I did it," and her voice rose slightly, with solemn emphasis—"I did it through a holy feeling that, since my life was due to you, therefore, as yours was gone, mine should replace it, and be devoted to the purpose which you had undertaken.

"I opened first the metallic case. It was under the dim shade of the African forest, and while holding on my knees the head of the man who had laid down his life for me. You know what I read there. I read of a father's love and

"I THOUGHT YOU DEAD, AND KNEW THE FULL MEASURE OF DESPAIR."

agony. I read there the name of the one who had driven him to death. The shadows of the forest grew darker around me; as the full meaning of that revelation came over my soul they deepened into blackness, and I fell senseless by your side.

"Better had Cato left us both lying there to die, and gone off in the boat himself. But he revived me. I laid you down gently, and propped up your head, but never again dared to defile you with the touch of one so infamous as I.

"There still remained the other package, which I read — how you reached that island, and how you got that MS., I neither know nor seek to discover; I only know that all my spirit awaked within me as I read those words. A strange, inexplicable feeling arose. I forgot all about you and your griefs. My whole soul was fixed on the figure of that bereaved and solitary man, who thus drifted to his fate. He seemed to speak to me. A fancy, born out of frenzy, no doubt, for all that horror well-nigh drove me mad—a fancy came to me that this voice, which had come from a distance of eighteen years, had spoken to me; a wild fancy, because I was eighteen years old, that therefore I was connected with these eighteen years, filled my whole soul. I thought that this MS. was mine, and the other one yours. I read it over and over, and over yet again, till every word forced itself into my memory—till you and your sorrows sank into oblivion beside the woes of this man.

"I sat near you all that night. The palms sighed in the air. I dared not touch you. My brain whirled. I thought I heard voices out at sea, and figures appeared in the gloom. I thought I saw before me the form of Colonel Despard. He looked at me with sadness unutterable, yet with soft pity and affection, and extended his hand as though to bless me. Madder fancies than ever then rushed through my brain. But when morning came and the excitement had passed I knew that I had been delirious.

"When that morning came *I* went over to look at you. To my amazement, you were breathing. Your life was renewed of itself. I knelt down and praised God for this, but did not dare to touch you. I folded up the treasures, and told Cato to put them again around your neck. Then I watched you till you recovered.

"But on that night, and after reading those MSS., I seemed to have passed into another stage of being. I [illegible] things to you now which I would not h[illegible] to say before, and strength is given me [illegible] all this before we part for evermore.

"I have awakened to infamy; for what is infamy if it be not this, to bear the name I bear? Something more than pride or vanity has been the foundation of that feeling of shame and hate with which I have always regarded it. And I have now died to my former life, and awakened to a new one.

"Louis Brandon, the agonies which may be suffered by those whom you seek to avenge I can conjecture but I wish never to hear. I pray God that I may never know what it might break my heart to learn. You must save them. you must also avenge them. You are strong, and you are implacable. When you strike your blow will be crushing.

"But I must go and bear my lot among those you strike; I will wait on among them, sharing their infamy and their fate. When your blow falls I will not turn away. I will think of those dear ones of yours who have suffered, and for their sakes will accept the blow of revenge."

Brandon had held her hand in silence, and with a convulsive pressure during these words. As she stopped she made a faint effort to withdraw it. He would not let her. He raised it to his lips and pressed it there.

Three times he made an effort to speak, and each time failed. At last, with a strong exertion, he uttered, in a hoarse voice and broken tones,

"Oh, Beatrice! Beatrice! how I love you!"

"I know it," said she, in the same monotone which she had used before—a tone of infinite mournfulness—"I have known it long, and I would say also, 'Louis Brandon, I love you,' if it were not that this would be the last infamy; that you, Brandon, of Brandon Hall, should be loved by one who bears my name."

The hours of the night passed away. They stood watching the English shores, speaking little. Brandon clung to her hand. They were sailing up the Thames. It was about four in the morning.

"We shall soon be there," said he; "sing to me for the last time. Sing, and forget for a moment that we must part."

Then, in a low voice, of soft but penetrating tones, which thrilled through every fibre of Brandon's being, Beatrice began to sing:

"Love made us one; our unity
Is indissoluble by act of thine.
For were this mortal being ended,
And our freed sp.rits in the world above,
Love, passing o'er the grave, would join us there,
As once he joined us here;
And the sad memory of the life below
Would but unite us closer evermore.
No act of thine may loose
Thee from the eternal bond,
Nor shall Revenge have power
To disunite us *there!*"

On that same day they landed in London. The Governor's lady at Sierra Leone had insisted on replenishing Beatrice's wardrobe, so that she showed no appearance of having gone through the troubles which had afflicted her on sea and shore.

Brandon took her to a hotel and then went to his agent's. He also examined the papers for the last four months. He read in the morning journals a notice which had already appeared of the arrival of the ship off the Nore, and the statement that three of the passengers of the *Falcon* had reached Sierra Leone. He communicated to the owners of the *Falcon* the particulars of the loss of the slip, and earned their thanks, for they were able to get their insurance without waiting a year, as is necessary where nothing is heard of a missing vessel.

He traveled with Beatrice by rail and coach as far as the village of Brandon. At the inn he engaged a carriage to take her up to her father's house. It was Brandon Hall, as he very well knew.

But little was said during all this time. Words were useless. Silence formed the best communion for them. He took her hand at parting. She spoke not a word; his lips moved, but no audible sound escaped. Yet in their eyes as they fastened themselves on one another in an intense gaze there was read all that unutterable passion of love, of longing, and of sorrow that each felt.

The carriage drove off. Brandon watched it. "Now farewell, Love, forever," he murmured, "and welcome Vengeance!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

INQUIRIES.

So many years had elapsed since Brandon had last been in the village which bore the family name that he had no fear of being recognized. He had been a boy then, he was now a man. His features had passed from a transition state into their maturer form, and a thick beard and mustache, the growth of the long voyage, covered the lower part of the face like a mask. His nose which, when he left, had a boyish roundness of outline, had since become refined and chiseled into the straight, thin Grecian type. His eyes alone remained the same, yet the expression had grown different, even as the soul that looked forth through them had been changed by experience and by suffering.

He gave himself out at the inn as an American merchant, and went out to begin his inquiries. Tearing two buttons off his coat, he entered the shop of the village tailor.

"Good-morning," said he, civilly.

"Good-morning, Sir; fine morning, Sir," answered the tailor, volubly. He was a little

man, with a cast in his eye, and on looking at Brandon he had to put his head on one side, which he did with a quick, odd gesture.

"There are two buttons off my coat, and I want to know if you can repair it for me?"

"Certainly, Sir; certainly. Take off your coat, Sir, and sit down."

"The buttons," said Brandon, "are a little odd; but if you have not got any exactly like them, any thing similar will do."

"Oh, I think we'll fit you out, Sir. I think we'll fit you out," rejoined the tailor, briskly.

He bustled about among his boxes and drawers, pulled out a large number of articles, and finally began to select the buttons which were nearest like those on the coat.

"This is a fine little village," said Brandon, carelessly,

"Yes, Sir; that's a fact, Sir; that's just what every body says, Sir."

"What old Hall is that which I saw just outside the village?"

"Ah, Sir, that old Hall is the very best in the whole county. It is Brandon Hall, Sir."

"Brandon Hall?"

"Yes, Sir."

"I suppose this village takes the name from the Hall—or is it the Hall that is named after the village?"

"Well, neither, Sir. Both of them were named after the Brandon family."

"Is it an old family? It must be, of course."

"The oldest in the county, Sir."

"I wonder if Mr. Brandon would let a stranger go through his grounds? There is a hill back of the house that I should like to see."

"Mr. Brandon!" exclaimed the tailor, shaking his head; "Mr. Brandon! There ain't no Mr. Brandon now!"

"How is that?"

"Gone, Sir—ruined—died out."

"Then the man that lives there now is not Mr. Brandon?"

"Nothing of the kind, Sir! He, Sir! Why he isn't fit to clean the shoes of any of the old Brandons!"

"Who is he?"

"His name, Sir, is Potts."

"Potts! That doesn't sound like one of your old county names."

"I should think not, Sir. Potts! Why, Sir, he's generally believed in this here community to be a villain, Sir," said the little tailor, mysteriously, and with the look of a man who would like very well to be questioned further.

Brandon humored him. "How is that?"

"It's a long story, Sir."

"Oh, well—tell it. I have a great curiosity to hear any old stories current in your English villages. I'm an American, and English life is new to me."

"I'll bet you never heard any thing like this in all your born days."

"Tell it then, by all means."

The tailor jumped down from his seat, went mysteriously to the door, looked cautiously out, and then returned.

"It's just as well to be a little careful," said he, "for if that man knew that I was talking about him he'd take it out of me quick enough, I tell you."

"You seem to be afraid of him."

"We're all afraid of him in the village, and hate him; but I hope to God he'll catch it yet!"

"How can you be afraid of him? You all say that this is a free country."

"No man, Sir, in any country, is free, except he's rich. Poor people can be oppressed in many ways; and most of us are in one way or other dependent on him. We hate him all the worse, though. But I'll tell you about him."

"Yes, go on."

"Well, Sir, old Mr. Brandon, about twenty years ago, was one of the richest men in the county. About fifteen years ago the man Potts turned up, and however the old man took a fancy to him I never could see, but he did take a fancy to him, put all his money in some tin mines that Potts had started, and the end of it was Potts turned out a scoundrel, as every one said he would, swindled the old man out of every penny, and ruined him completely. Brandon had to sell his estate, and Potts bought it with the very money out of which he had cheated the old man."

"Oh! impossible!" said Brandon. "Isn't that some village gossip?"

"I wish it was, Sir—but it ain't. Go ask any man here, and he'll tell you the same."

"And what became of the family?" asked Brandon, calmly.

"Ah, Sir! that is the worst part of it."

"Why?"

"I'll tell you, Sir. He was ruined. He gave up all. He hadn't a penny left. He went out of the Hall and lived for a short time in a small house at the other end of the village. At last he spent what little money he had left, and they all got sick. You wouldn't believe what happened after that."

"What was it?"

"They were all taken to the alms-house."

A burst of thunder seemed to sound in Brandon's ears as he heard this, which he had never even remotely imagined. The tailor was occupied with his own thoughts, and did not notice the wildness that for an instant appeared in Brandon's eyes. The latter for a moment felt paralyzed and struck down into nothingness by the shock of that tremendous intelligence.

"The people felt dreadfully about it," continued the tailor, "but they couldn't do any thing. It was Potts who had the family taken to the alms-house. Nobody dared to interfere."

"Did none of the county families do any thing?" said Brandon, who at last, by a violent effort, had regained his composure.

"No. They had all been insulted by the old man, so now they let him suffer."

"Had he no old friends, or even acquaintances?"

"Well, that's what we all asked ourselves, Sir; but at any rate, whether he had or not, they didn't turn up—that is, not in time. There was a young man here when it was too late."

"A young man?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Was he a relative?"

"Oh no, Sir, only a lawyer's clerk; wanted to see about business I dare say. Perhaps to collect a bill. Let me see; the lawyer who sent him was named Thornton."

"Thornton!" said Brandon, as the name sank into his soul.

"Yes; he lived at Holby."

Brandon drew a long breath.

"No, Sir; no friends came, whether he had any or not. They were all sick at the almshouse for weeks."

"And I suppose they all died there?" said Brandon, in a strange, sweet voice.

"No, Sir. They were not so happy."

"What suffering could be greater?"

"They do talk dreadfully in this town, Sir; and I dare say it's not true, but if it is it's enough to make a man's blood run cold."

"You excite my curiosity. Remember I am an American, and these things seem odd to me. I always thought your British aristocrats could not be ruined."

"Here was one, Sir, that was, anyhow."

"Go on."

"Well, Sir, the old man died in the almshouse. The others got well. As soon as they were well enough they went away."

"How did they get away?"

"Potts helped them," replied the tailor, in a peculiar tone. "They went away from the village."

"Where did they go?"

"People say to Liverpool. I only tell what I know. I heard young Bill Potts, the old fellow's son, boasting one night at the inn where he was half drunk, how they had served the Brandons. He said they wanted to leave the village, so his father helped them away to America."

"To America?"

"Yes, Sir."

Brandon made no rejoinder.

"Bill Potts said they went to Liverpool, and then left for America to make their fortunes."

"What part of America?" asked Brandon, indifferently. "I never saw or heard of them."

"Didn't you, Sir?" asked the tailor, who evidently thought that America was like some English county, where every body may hear of every body else. "That's odd, too. I was going to ask you if you had."

"I wonder what ship they went out in?"

"That I can't say, Sir. Bill Potts kept dark about that. He said one thing, though, that set us thinking."

"What was that?"

"Why, that they went out in an emigrant ship as steerage passengers."

Brandon was silent.

"Poor people!" said he at last.

By this time the tailor had finished his coat and handed it back to him. Having obtained all the information that the man could give Brandon paid him and left.

Passing by the inn he walked on till he came to the alms-house. Here he stood for a while and looked at it.

Brandon alms-house was small, badly planned, badly managed, and badly built, every thing done there was badly and meanly done. It was whitewashed from the topmost point of every chimney down to the lowest edge of the basement. A whited sepulchre. For there was foulness there, in the air, in the surroundings, in every thing. Squalor and dirt reigned. His heart grew sick as those hideous walls rose before his sight.

Between this and Brandon Hall there was a difference, a distance almost immeasurable; to pass from one to the other might be conceived of as incredible; and yet that passage had been made.

To fall so far as to go the whole distance between the two; to begin in one and end in the other; to be born, brought up, and live and move and have one's being in the one, and then to die in the other; what was more incredible than this? Yet this had been the fate of his father.

Leaving the place, he walked directly toward Brandon Hall.

Brandon Hall was begun, nobody knows exactly when; but it is said that the foundations were laid before the time of Egbert. In all parts of the old mansion the progress of English civilization might be studied; in the Norman arches of the old chapel, the slender pointed style of the fifteenth century doorway that opened to the same, the false Grecian of the early Tudor period, and the wing added in Elizabeth's day, the days of that old Ralph Brandon who sank his ship and its treasure to prevent it from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Around this grand old Hall were scenes which could be found nowhere save in England. Wide fields, forever green with grass like velvet, over which rose groves of oak and elm, giving shelter to innumerable birds. There the deer bounded and the hare found a covert. The broad avenue that led to the Hall went up through a world of rich sylvan scenery, winding through groves and meadows and over undulating ground. Before the Hall lay the open sea about three miles away; but the Hall was on an eminence and overlooked all the intervening ground. Standing there one might see the gradual decline of the country as it sloped downward toward the margin of the ocean. On the left a bold promontory jutted far out, on the nearer side of which there was an island with a light-house; on the right was another promontory, not so bold. Between these two the whole country was like a garden. A little cove gave shelter to small vessels, and around this cove was the village of Brandon.

Brandon Hall was one of the oldest and most magnificent of the great halls of England. As Brandon looked upon it it rose before him amidst the groves of six hundred years, its many-gabled roof rising out from amidst a sea of foliage, speaking of wealth, luxury, splendor, power, influence, and all that men hope for, or struggle for, or fight for; from all of which he and his had been cast out; and the one who had done this was even now occupying the old ancestral seat of his family.

Brandon entered the gate, and walked up the long avenue till he reached the Hall. Here he rang the bell, and a servant appeared. "Is Mr. Potts at home?"

"Yes," said the man, brusquely.

"I wish to see him."

"Who shall I say?"

"Mr. Hendricks, from America."

The man showed him into the drawing-room. Brandon seated himself and waited. The room was furnished in the most elegant manner, most of the furniture being old, and all familiar to him. He took a hasty glance around, and closed his eyes as if to shut it all out from sight.

In a short time a man entered.

He appeared to be between fifty and sixty years of age, of medium size, broad-shouldered

"YOU ARE, SIR. JOHN POTTS OF POTTS HALL."

and stout. He had a thoroughly plebeian air; he was dressed in black, and had a bunch of large seals dangling from beneath his waistcoat. His face was round and fleshy, his eyes were small, and his head was bald. The general expression of his face was that of good-natured simplicity. As he caught sight of Brandon a frank smile of welcome arose on his broad, fat face.

Brandon rose and bowed.

"Am I addressing Mr. John Potts?"

"You are, Sir. John Potts of Potts Hall."

"Potts of Potts Hall!" repeated Brandon. Then, drawing a card from his pocket he handed it to Potts. He had procured some of these in London. The card read as follows:

BEAMISH & HENDRICKS,

FLOUR MERCHANTS & PROVISION DEALERS,

88 FRONT STREET, CINCINNATI,

OHIO.

"I, Sir," said Brandon, "am Mr. Hendricks, junior partner in Beamish & Hendricks, and I hope you are quite well."

"Very well, thank you," answered Potts, smiling and sitting down. "I am happy to see you."

"Do you keep your health, Sir?"

"Thank you, I do," said Potts. "A touch of rheumatism at odd times, that's all."

Brandon's manner was stiff and formal, and his voice had assumed a slight nasal intonation. Potts had evidently looked on him as a perfect stranger.

"I hope, Sir, that I am not taking up your valuable time. You British noblemen have your valuable time, I know, as well as we business men."

"No, Sir, no, Sir, not at all," said Potts, evidently greatly delighted at being considered a British nobleman.

"Well, Sir John—or is it my lord?" said Brandon, interrogatively, correcting himself, and looking inquiringly at Potts.

"Sir John'll do," said Potts.

"Well, Sir John. Being in England on business, I came to ask you a few questions about a matter of some importance to us."

"Proceed, Sir!" said Potts, with great dignity.

"There's a young man that came into our employ last October whom we took a fancy to, or rather my senior did, and we have an idea of promoting him. My senior thinks the world of him, has the young man at his house, and he is

even making up to his daughter. He calls himself Brandon—Frank Brandon."

At this Potts started from an easy lounging attitude, in which he was trying to "do" the British noble, and with startling intensity of gaze looked Brandon full in the face.

"I think the young man is fairish," continues Brandon, "but nothing extraordinary. He is industrious and sober, but he ain't quick, and he never had any real business experience till he came to us. Now, my senior from the very first was infatuated with him, gave him a large salary, and, in spite of my warnings that he ought to be cautious, he wants to make him head-clerk, with an eye to making him partner next year. And so bent on this is he that I know he would dissolve partnership with me if I refused, take the young man, let him marry his daughter, and leave him all his money when he dies. That's no small sum, for old Mr. Beamish is worth in real estate round Cincinnati over two millions of dollars. So, you see, I have a right to feel anxious, more especially as I don't mind telling you, Sir John, who understand these matters, that I thought I had a very good chance myself with old Beamish's daughter."

Brandon spoke all this very rapidly, and with the air of one who was trying to conceal his feelings of dislike to the clerk of whom he was so jealous. Potts looked at him with an encouraging smile, and asked, as he stopped,

"And how did you happen to hear of me?"

"That's just what I was coming to, Sir John!" Brandon drew his chair nearer, apparently in deep excitement, and in a more nasal tone than ever, with a confidential air, he went on:

"You see, I mistrusted this young man who was carrying every thing before him with a high hand, right in my very teeth, and I watched him. I pumped him to see if I couldn't get him to tell something about himself. But the fellow was always on his guard, and always told the same story. This is what he tells: He says that his father was Ralph Brandon of Brandon Hall, Devonshire, and that he got very poor—he was ruined, in fact, by— I beg your pardon, Sir John, but he says it was you, and that you drove the family away. They then came over to America, and he got to Cincinnati. The old man, he says, died before they left, but he won't tell what became of the others. I confess I believed it was all a lie, and didn't think there was any such place as Brandon Hall, so I determined to find out, naturally enough, Sir John, when two millions were at stake."

Potts winked.

"Well, I suddenly found my health giving way, and had to come to Europe. You see what a delicate creature I am!"

Potts laughed with intense glee.

"And I came here after wandering about, trying to find it. I heard at last that there was a place that used to be Brandon Hall, though most people call it Potts Hall. Now, I thought, my fine young man, I'll catch you; for I'll call on Sir John himself and ask him."

"You did right, Sir," said Potts, who had taken an intense interest in this narrative. "I'm the very man you ought to have come to. I can tell you all you want. This Brandon is a miserable swindler."

"Good! I thought so. You'll give me that, Sir John, over your own name, will you?" cried Brandon, in great apparent excitement.

"Of course I will," said Potts, "and a good deal more. But tell me, first, what that young devil said as to how he got to Cincinnati? How did he find his way there?"

"He would never tell."

"What became of his mother and sister?"

"He wouldn't say."

"All I know," said Potts, "is this, I got official information that they all died at Quebec."

Brandon looked suddenly at the floor and gasped. In a moment he had recovered.

"Curse him! then this fellow is an impostor?"

"No," said Potts, "he must have escaped. It's possible. There was some confusion at Quebec about names."

"Then his name may really be Frank Brandon?"

"It must be," said Potts. "Anyhow, the others are all right."

"Are what?"

"All right; dead you know. That's why he don't like to tell you about them."

"Well, now, Sir John, could you tell me what you know about this young man, since you think he must be the same one?"

"I know he must be, and I'll tell you all about him and the whole cursed lot. In the first place," continued Potts, clearing his throat, "old Brandon was one of the cursedest old fools that ever lived. He was very well off but wanted to get richer, and so he speculated in a tin mine in Cornwall. I was acquainted with him at the time and used to respect him. He persuaded me—I was always off-handed about money, and a careless, easy fellow—he persuaded me to invest in it also. I did so, but at the end of a few years I found out that the tin mine was a rotten concern, and sold out. I sold at a very high price, for people believed it was a splendid property. After this I found another mine and made money hand over fist. I warned old Brandon, and so did every body, but he didn't care a fig for what we said, and finally, one fine morning, he waked up and found himself ruined.

"He was more utterly ruined than any man I ever knew of, and all his estates were sold. I had made some money, few others in the county had any ready cash, the sale was forced, and I bought the whole establishment at a remarkably low figure. I got old Brandy—Brandy was a nickname I gave the old fellow—I got him a house in the village, and supported him for a while with his wife and daughter and his great lubberly boy. I soon found out what vipers they were. They all turned against their benefactor, and dared to say that I had ruined their father. In fact, my only fault was buying the place, and that was an advantage to old Brandy rather than an injury. It shows, though, what human nature is.

"They all got sick at last, and as they had no one to nurse them, I very considerately sent them all to the alms-house, where they had good beds, good attendance, and plenty to eat and drink. No matter what I did for them they abused me. They reviled me for sending them to a comfortable home, and old Brandy was the worst of all. I used to go and visit him two or three times a day, and he always cursed me. Old Brandy did get awfully profane, that's a fact. The reason

was his infernal pride. Look at me, now! I'm not proud. Put me in the alms-house, and would I curse you? I hope not.

"At last old Brandy died, and of course I had to look out for the family. They seemed thrown on my hands, you know, and I was too good-natured to let them suffer, although they treated me so abominably. The best thing I could think of was to ship them all off to America, where they could all get rich. So I took them to Liverpool."

"Did they want to go?"

"They didn't seem to have an idea in their heads. They looked and acted just like three born fools."

"Strange!"

"I let a friend of mine see about them, as I had considerable to do, and he got them a passage."

"I suppose you paid their way out."

"I did, Sir," said Potts, with an air of munificence; "but, between you and me, it didn't cost much."

"I should think it must have cost a considerable sum."

"Oh no! Clark saw to that. Clark got them places as steerage passengers."

"Young Brandon told me once that he came out as cabin passenger."

"That's his cursed pride. He went out in the steerage, and a devilish hard time he had too."

"Why?"

"Oh, he was a little crowded, I think! There were six hundred emigrants on board the *Tecumseh*—"

"The what?"

"The *Tecumseh*. Clark did that business neatly. Each passenger had to take his own provisions, so he supplied them with a lot. Now what do you think he gave them?"

"I can't imagine."

"He bought them some damaged bread at one quarter the usual price. It was all mouldy, you know," said Potts, trying to make Brandon see the joke. "I declare Clark and I roared over it for a couple of months, thinking how surprised they must have been when they sat down to eat their first dinner."

"That was very neat," rejoined Brandon.

"They were all sick when they left," said Potts; "but before they got to Quebec they were sicker, I'll bet."

"Why so?"

"Did you ever hear of ship-fever?" said Potts, in a low voice which sent a sharp thrill through every fibre of Brandon's being. He could only nod his head.

"Well, the *Tecumseh*, with her six hundred passengers, afforded an uncommon fine field for the ship-fever. That's what I was going to observe. They had a great time at Quebec last summer; but it was unanimously voted that the *Tecumseh* was the worst ship of the lot. I sent out an agent to see what had become of my three friends, and he came back and told me all. He said that about four hundred of the *Tecumseh's* passengers died during the voyage, and ever so many more after landing. He obtained a list of the dead from the quarantine records, and among them were those of these three youthful Brandons. Yes, they joined old Cognac pretty soon—lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death not divided. But this young devil that you speak of must have escaped. I dare say he did, for the confusion was awful."

"But couldn't there have been another son?"

"Oh no. There was another son, the eldest, the worst of the whole lot, so infernally bad that even old Brandy himself couldn't stand it, but packed him off to Botany Bay. It's well he went of his own accord, for if he hadn't the law would have sent him there at last transported for life."

"Perhaps this man is the same one."

"Oh no. This eldest Brandy is dead."

"Are you sure?"

"Certain—best authority. A business friend of mine was in the same ship with him. Brandy was coming home to see his friends. He fell overboard and my friend saw him drown. It was in the Indian Ocean."

"When was that?"

"Last September."

"Oh, then this one must be the other of course!"

"No doubt of that, I think," said Potts, cheerily.

Brandon rose. "I feel much obliged, Sir John," said he, stiffly, and with his usual nasal tone, "for your kindness. This is just what I want. I'll put a stop to my young man's game. It's worth coming to England to find out this."

"Well, when you walk him out of your office, give him my respects and tell him I'd be very happy to see him. For I would, you know, I really would."

"I'll tell him so," said Brandon, "and if he is alive perhaps he'll come here."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Potts.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Brandon, and pretending not to see Potts's outstretched hand, he bowed and left. He walked rapidly down the avenue. He felt stifled. The horrors that had been revealed to him had been but in part anticipated. Could there be any thing worse?

He left the gates and walked quickly away, he knew not where. Turning into a by-path he went up a hill and finally sat down. Brandon Hall lay not far away. In front was the village and the sea beyond it. All the time there was but one train of thoughts in his mind. His wrongs took shape and framed themselves into a few sharply defined ideas. He muttered to himself over and over the things that were in his mind: "Myself disinherited and exiled! My father ruined and broken-hearted! My father killed! My mother, brother, and sister banished, starved, and murdered!"

He, too, as far as Potts's will was concerned, had been slain. He was alone and had no hope that any of his family could survive. Now, as he sat there alone, he needed to make his plans for the future. One thing stood out prominently before him, which was that he must go immediately to Quebec to find out finally and absolutely the fate of the family.

Then could any thing else be done in England? He thought over the names of those who had been the most intimate friends of his father—Thornton, Langhetti, Despard. Thornton had neglected his father in his hour of need. He had merely sent a clerk to make inquiries after all was over. The elder Langhetti, Brandon knew, was dead. Where were the others? None of them, at any rate, had interfered.

There remained the family of Despard. Bran-

don was aware that the Colonel had a brother in the army, but where he was he knew not nor did he care. If he chose to look in the army register he might very easily find out; but why should he? He had never known or heard much of him in any way.

There remained Courtenay Despard, the son of Lionel, he to whom the MS. of the dead might be considered after all as chiefly devolving. Of him Brandon knew absolutely nothing, not even whether he was alive or dead.

For a time he discussed the question in his mind whether it might not be well to seek him out so as to show him his father's fate and gain his co-operation. But after a few moments' consideration he dismissed this thought. Why should he seek his help? Courtenay Despard, if alive, might be very unfit for the purpose. He might be timid, or indifferent, or dull, or indolent. Why make any advances to one whom he did not know? Afterward it might be well to find him, and see what might be done with or through him; but as yet there could be no reason whatever why he should take up his time in searching for him or in winning his confidence.

The end of it all was that he concluded whatever he did to do it by himself, with no human being as his confidant.

Only one or two persons in all the world knew that he was alive, and they were not capable, under any circumstances, of betraying him. And where now was Beatrice? In the power of this man whom Brandon had just left. Had she seen him as he came and went? Had she heard his voice as he spoke in that assumed tone? But Brandon found it necessary to crush down all thoughts of her.

One thing gave him profound satisfaction, and this was that Potts did not suspect him for an instant. And now how could he deal with Potts? The man had become wealthy and powerful. To cope with him needed wealth and power. How could Brandon obtain these? At the utmost he could only count upon the fifteen thousand pounds which Compton would remit. This would be as nothing to help him against his enemy. He had written to Compton that he had fallen overboard and been picked up, and had told the same to the London agents under the strictest secrecy, so as to be able to get the money which he needed. Yet after he got it all, what would be the benefit? First of all, wealth was necessary.

Now more than ever there came to his mind the ancestral letter which his father had inclosed to him—the message from old Ralph Brandon in the treasure-ship. It was a wild, mad hope; but was it unattainable? This he felt was now the one object that lay before him; this must first be sought after, and nothing else could be attempted or even thought of till it had been tried. If he failed, then other things might be considered.

Sitting there on his lonely height, in sight of his ancestral home, he took out his father's last letter and read it again, after which he once more read the old message from the treasure-ship:

"One league due northe of a smalle islet northe of y^e Islet of Santa Cruz northe of San Salvador ——— I Ralphe Brandon in my shippe Phoenix am becalmed and surrounded by a Spanish fleete ——— My shippe is filld with spoyle the Plunder of III galleons ——— wealthe w^h myghte purchasse a kyngdom—tresure equalle to an Empyr's revenue ——— Gold and Jeweles in countless store ——— and God forbydde that itt shall falle into y^e hands of y^e Enemye ——— I therefore Ralphe Brandon out of mine owne good wyl and intente and that of all my men sink this shippe rather than be taken alyve ——— I send this by my trusty seaman Peter Leggit who with IX others tolde off by lot will trye to escape in y^e Boate by nighte ——— If this cometh haply into y^e hands of my sonne Philip let him herebye knowe that in this place is all this tresure ——— w^h haply may yet be gatherd from y^e sea ——— y^e Islet is knowne by III rockes that be pushed up like III needles from y^e sande

"Ralphe Brandon"

Five days afterward Brandon, with his Hindu servant, was sailing out of the Mersey River on his way to Quebec.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

It was early in the month of August when Brandon visited the quarantine station at Gosse Island, Quebec. A low, wooden building stood near the landing, with a sign over the door containing only the word "OFFICE." To this building Brandon directed his steps. On entering he saw only one clerk there.

"Are you the superintendent?" he asked, bowing courteously.

"No," said the clerk. "He is in Quebec just now."

"Perhaps you can give me the information that I want."

"What is it?"

"I have been sent to inquire after some passengers that came out here last year."

"Oh yes, I can tell all that can be told," said the clerk, readily. "We have the registration books here, and you are at liberty to look up any names you wish. Step this way, please." And he led the way to an inner office.

"What year did they come out in?" asked the clerk.

"Last year."

"Last year—an awful year to look up. 1846—yes, here is the book for that year—a year which you are aware was an unparalleled one."

"I have heard so."

"Do you know the name of the ship?"

"The *Tecumseh*."

"The *Tecumseh!*" exclaimed the clerk, with a startled look. "That is an awful name in our records. I am sorry you have not another name to examine, for the *Tecumseh* was the worst of all."

Brandon bowed.

"The *Tecumseh*," continued the clerk, turning over the leaves of the book as it lay on the desk. "The *Tecumseh*, from Liverpool, sailed June 2, arrived August 16. Here you see the names of those who died at sea, copied from the ship's books, and those who died on shore. It is a frightful mortality. Would you like to look over the list?"

Brandon bowed and advanced to the desk.

"The deaths on board ship show whether they were seamen or passengers, and the passengers are marked as cabin and steerage. But after landing it was impossible to keep an account of classes."

Brandon carefully ran his eye down the long list, and read each name. Those for which he looked did not appear. At last he came to the

list of those who had died on shore. After reading a few names his eye was arrested by one—

"*Brandon, Elizabeth.*"

It was his mother. He read on. He soon came to another—

"*Brandon, Edith.*" It was his sister.

"Do you find any of the names?" asked the clerk, seeing Brandon turn his head.

"Yes," said Brandon; "this is one," and he pointed to the last name. "But I see a mark opposite that name. What is it? 'B' and 'A.' What is the meaning?"

"Is that party a relative of yours?"

"No," said Brandon.

"You don't mind hearing something horrible, then?"

"No."

The clerk drew a long breath.

"Well, Sir, those letters were written by the late superintendent. The poor man is now a lunatic. He was here last year.

"You see this is how it was: The ship-fever broke out. The number of sick was awful, and there were no preparations for them here. The disease in some respects was worse than cholera, and there was nothing but confusion. Very many died from lack of nursing. But the worst feature of the whole thing was the hurried burials.

"I was not here last year, and all who were here then have left. But I've heard enough to make me sick with horror. You perhaps are aware that in this ship-fever there sometimes occurs a total loss of sense, which is apt to be mistaken for death?"

The clerk paused. Brandon regarded him steadily for a moment. Then he turned, and looked earnestly at the book.

"The burials were very hastily made."

"Well?"

"And it is now believed that some were buried in a state of trance."

"Buried alive?"

"Buried alive!"

There was a long silence. Brandon's eyes were fixed on the book. At last he pointed to the name of Edith Brandon.

"Then, I suppose," he said, in a steady voice, which, however, was in a changed key, "these letters 'B' and 'A' are intended to mean something of that description?"

"Something of that sort," replied the clerk.

Brandon drew a long breath.

"But there is no certainty about it in this particular case. I will tell you how these marks happened to be made. The clerk that was here last told me.

"One morning, according to him, the superintendent came in, looking very much excited and altered. He went to this book, where the entries of burials had been made on the preceding evening. This name was third from the last. Twelve had been buried. He penciled these letters there and left. People did not notice him; every body was sick or busy. At last in the evening of the next day, when they were to bury a new lot, they found the superintendent digging at the grave the third from the last. They tried to stop him, but he shouted and moaned alternately 'Buried alive!' 'Buried alive!' In fact they saw that he was crazy, and had to confine him at once."

"Did they examine the grave?"

"Yes. The woman told my predecessor that she and her husband—who did the burying—had examined it, and found the body not only dead, but corrupt. So there's no doubt of it. That party must have been dead at any rate."

"Who was the woman?"

"An old woman that laid them out. She and her husband buried them."

"Where is she now?"

"I don't know."

"Does she stay here yet?"

"No. She left last year."

"What became of the superintendent?"

"He was taken home, but grew no better. At last he had to be sent to an asylum. Some examination was made by the authorities, but nothing ever came of it. The papers made no mention of the affair, and it was hushed up."

Brandon read on. At last he came to another name. It was simply this: "*Brandon.*" There was a slight movement on the clerk's part as Brandon came to this name. "There is no Christian name here," said Brandon. "I suppose they did not know it."

"Well," said the clerk, "there's something peculiar about that. The former clerk never mentioned it to any body but me. That man didn't die at all."

"What do you mean?" said Brandon, who could scarcely speak for the tremendous struggle between hope and despair that was going on within him.

"It's a false entry."

"How?"

"The superintendent wrote that. See, the handwriting is different from the others. One is that of the clerk who made all these entries; the other is the superintendent's."

Brandon looked and saw that this was the case.

"What was the cause of that?"

"The clerk told me that after making these next fifteen entries of buried parties—buried the evening after these last twelve—he went away to see about something. When he came back the next morning this name was written in the superintendent's hand. He did not know what to think of it, so he concluded to ask the superintendent; but in the course of the day he heard that he was mad and in confinement, as I have told you."

"Then you mean that this is not an entry of a death at all."

"Yes. The fact is, the superintendent for some reason got it into his head that this Brandon"—and he pointed to Edith's name—"had been buried alive. He brooded over the name, and among other things wrote it down here at the end of the list for the day. That's the way in which my predecessor accounted for it."

"It is a very natural one," said Brandon.

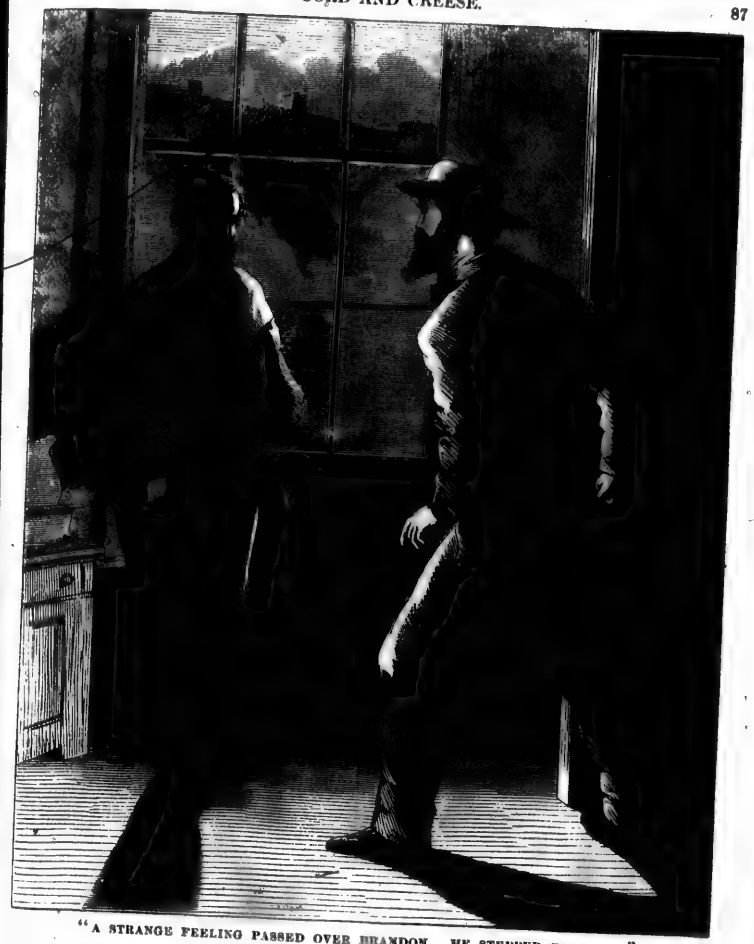
"Quite so. The clerk let it stand. You see, if he had erased it, he might have been overhauled, and there would have been a committee. He was afraid of that; so he thought it better to say nothing about it. He wouldn't have told me, only he said that a party came here once for a list of all the dead of the *Tecumseh*, and he copied all out, including this doubtful one. He thought that he had done wrong, and therefore told me, so that if any particular inquiries were ever made I might know what to say."

"Are there many mistakes in these records?"

"A st

"I dare say th
for 1846. There
names got change
could only be co
recovered. As s
had not been sick
there was inaccur
Brandon had no
ed the clerk and
There was a fair
yet be alive. On
cided what to do.
serted an advertis
the following effec

INFORMATION o
DON," who came



"A STRANGE FEELING PASSED OVER BRANDON. HE STEPPED FORWARD."

"I dare say there are a good many in the list for 1846. There was so much confusion that names got changed, and people died whose names could only be conjectured by knowing who had recovered. As some of those that recovered or had not been sick slipped away secretly, of course there was inaccuracy."

Brandon had nothing more to ask. He thanked the clerk and departed.

There was a faint hope, then, that Frank might yet be alive. On his way up to Quebec he decided what to do. As soon as he arrived he inserted an advertisement in the chief papers to the following effect:

NOTICE!

INFORMATION of any one of the name of "BRANDON," who came out in the ship *Tecumseh* in 1846 from Liverpool to Quebec, is earnestly desired by friends of the family. A liberal reward will be given to any one who can give the above information. Apply to

HENRY PETERS,
22 Place d'Armes.

Brandon waited in Quebec six weeks without any result. He then went to Montreal and inserted the same notice in the papers there, and in other towns in Canada, giving his Montreal address. After waiting five or six weeks in Montreal he went to Toronto, and advertised again, giving his new address. He waited here for some time, till at length the month of November began to draw to a close. Not yet despondent, he began to form a plan for advertising in every city of the United States.

Meanwhile he had received many communications, all of which, however, were made with the

vague hope of getting a reward. None were at all reliable. At length he thought that it was useless to wait any longer in Canada, and concluded to go to New York as a centre of action.

He arrived in New York at the end of December, and immediately began to insert his notices in all parts of the country, giving his address at the Astor House.

One day, as he came in from the street, he was informed that there was some one in his room who wished to see him. He went up calmly, thinking that it was some new person with intelligence.

On entering the room he saw a man standing by the window, in his shirt-sleeves, dressed in coarse clothes. The man was very tall, broad-shouldered, with large, Roman features, and heavy beard and mustache. His face was marked by profound dejection; he looked like one whose whole life had been one long misfortune. Louis Brandon had never seen any face which bore so deep an impress of suffering.

The stranger turned as he came in and looked at him with his sad eyes earnestly.

"Sir," said he, in a voice which thrilled through Brandon, "are you Henry Peters?"

A strange feeling passed over Brandon. He stepped forward.

"Frank!" he cried, in a broken voice.

"Merciful Heavens!" cried the other. "Have you too come up from the dead? Louis!"

In this meeting between the two brothers, after so many eventful years of separation, each had much to tell. Each had a story so marvelous that the other might have doubted it, had not the marvels of his own experience been equally great. Frank's story, however, is the only one that the reader will care to hear, and that must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XX.

FRANK'S STORY.

"AFTER you left," said Frank, "all went to confusion. Potts lorded it with a higher hand than ever, and my father was more than ever infatuated, and seemed to feel that it was necessary to justify his harshness toward you by publicly exhibiting a greater confidence in Potts. Like a thoroughly vulgar and base nature, this man could not be content with having the power, but loved to exhibit that power to us. Life to me for years became one long death; a hundred times I would have turned upon the scoundrel and taken vengeance for our wrongs, but the tears of my mother forced me to use self-control. You had been driven off; I alone was left, and she implored me by my love for her to stand by her. I wished her to take her own little property and go with me and Edith where we might all live in seclusion together; but this she would not do for fear of staining the proud Brandon name.

"Potts grew worse and worse every year. There was a loathsome son of his whom he used to bring with him, and my father was infatuated enough to treat the younger devil with the same civility which he showed to the elder one. Poor father! he really believed, as he afterward told me, that these men were putting millions of money into his hands, and that he would be the Beckford of his generation.

"After a while another scoundrel, called Clark, appeared, who was simply the counterpart of Potts. Of this man something very singular was soon made known to me.

"One day I was strolling through the grounds when suddenly, as I passed through a grove which stood by a fish-pond, I heard voices and saw the two men I hated most of all on earth standing near me. They were both naked. They had the audacity to go bathing in the fish-pond. Clark had his back turned toward me, and I saw on it, below the neck, three marks, fiery red, as though they had been made by a brand. They were these;" and taking a pencil, Frank made the following marks:

Louis looked at this with intense excitement.

"You have been in New South Wales," said Frank, "and perhaps know whether it is true or not that these are brands on convicts?"

"It is true, and on convicts of the very worst kind."

"Do you know what they mean?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Only the worst are branded with a single mark, so you may imagine what a triple mark indicates. But I will tell you the meaning of each. The first (∧) is the king's mark put on those who are totally irreclaimable and insubordinate. The second (R) means runaway, and is put on those who have attempted to escape. The third (+) indicates a murderous attack on the guards. When they are not hung, they are branded with this mark; and those who are branded in this way are condemned to hard work, in chains, for life."

"That's about what I supposed," said Frank, quietly, "only of course you are more particular. After seeing this I told my father. He refused to believe me. I determined to bring matters to a crisis, and charged Potts, in my father's presence, with associating with a branded felon. Potts at once turned upon me and appealed to my father's sense of justice. He accused me of being so far carried away by prejudice as not to hesitate to invent a foul slander against an honest man. He said that Clark would be willing to be put to any test; he could not, however, ask him to expose himself—it was too outrageous, but would simply assert that my charge was false.

"My father as usual believed every word and gave me a stern reprimand. Louis, in the pres-

ance of my mother and sister I cursed my father on that day. Poor man! the blow soon fell. It was in 1845 that the crash came. I have not the heart to go into details now. I will tell you from time to time hereafter. It is enough to say that every penny was lost. We had to leave the Hall and took a little cottage in the village.

"All our friends and acquaintances stood aloof. My father's oldest friends never came near him. Old Langhetti was dead, and his son knew nothing about this. I will tell you more of him presently.

"Colonel Lionel Despard was dead. His sister Courtenay, was ignorant of all this, and was away in the North of England. There was Florence, and I can't account for his inaction. He married Langhetti's daughter too. That is a mystery."

"They are all false, Frank."

Frank looked up with something like a smile.

"No, not all; wait till you hear me through."

Frank drew a long breath. "We got sick there, and Potts had us taken to the alms-house. There we all prayed for death, but only my father's prayer was heard. He died of a broken heart. The rest of us lived on.

"Scarcely had my father been buried when Potts came to take us away. He insisted that we should leave the country, and offered to pay our way to America. We were all indifferent; we were paralyzed by grief. The alms-house was not a place that we could cling to, so we let ourselves drift, and allowed Potts to send us wherever he wished. We did not even hope for any thing better. We only hoped that somewhere or other we might all die. What else could we do? What else could I do? There was no friend to whom I could look: and if I ever thought of any thing, it was that America might possibly afford us a chance to get a living till death came.

"So we allowed ourselves to be sent wherever Potts chose, since it could not possibly make things worse than they were. He availed himself of our stolid indifference, put us as passengers in the steerage on board of a crowded emigrant ship, the *Tecumseh*, and gave us for our provisions some mouldy bread.

"We simply lived and suffered, and were all waiting for death, till one day an angel appeared who gave us a short respite, and saved us for a while from misery. This angel, Louis, was Paolo, the son of Langhetti.

"You look amazed. It was certainly an amazing thing that he should be on board the same ship with us. He was in the cabin. He noticed our misery without knowing who we were. He came to give us his pity and help us. When at last he found out our names he fell on our necks, kissed us, and wept aloud.

"He gave up his room in the cabin to my mother and sister, and slept and lived with me. Most of all he cheered us by the lofty, spiritual words with which he bade us look with contempt upon the troubles of life and aspire after immortal happiness. Yes, Louis; Langhetti gave us peace.

"There were six hundred passengers. The plague broke out among us. The deaths every day increased, and all were filled with despair. At last the sailors themselves began to die.

"I believe there was only one in all that ship who preserved calm reason and stood without fear during those awful weeks. That one was Langhetti. He found the officers of the ship panic-stricken, so he took charge of the steerage, organized nurses, watched over every thing, encouraged every body, and labored night and day. In the midst of all I fell sick, and he nursed me back to life. Most of all, that man inspired fortitude by the hope that beamed in his eyes, and by the radiancy of his smile. 'Never mind, Brandon,' said he as I lay, I thought doomed. 'Death is nothing. Life goes on. You will leave this pest-ship for a realm of light. Keep up your heart, my brother immortal, and praise God with your latest breath.'

"I recovered, and then stood by his side as best I might. I found that he had never told my mother of my sickness. At last my mother and sister in the cabin fell sick. I heard of it some days after, and was prostrated again. I grew better after a time; but just as we reached quarantine, Langhetti, who had kept himself up thus far, gave out completely, and fell before the plague."

"Did he die?" asked Louis, in a faltering voice.

"Not on ship-board. He was carried ashore senseless. My mother and sister were very low, and were also carried on shore. I, though weak, was able to nurse them all. My mother died first."

There was a long pause. At last Frank resumed:

"My sister gradually recovered; and then, through grief and fatigue, I fell sick for the third time. I felt it coming on. My sister nursed me; for a time I thought I was going to die. 'Oh, Edith,' I said, 'when I die, devote your life while it lasts to Langhetti, whom God sent to us in our [illegible] Save his life even if you give up your own.'

"After that I became delirious, and remained so for a long time. Weeks passed; and when at last I revived the plague was stayed, and but few sick were on the island. My case was a lingering one, for this was the third attack of the fever. Why I didn't die I can't understand. There was no attendance. All was confusion, horror, and death.

"When I revived the first question was after Langhetti and Edith. No one knew any thing about them. In the confusion we had been separated, and Edith had died alone."

"Who told you that she died?" asked Louis, with a troubled look.

Frank looked at him with a face of horror.

"Can you bear what I am going to say?"

"Yes."

"When I was able to move about I went to see if any one could tell me about Edith and Langhetti. I heard an awful story; that the superintendent had gone mad and had been found trying to dig open a grave, saying that some one was *buried alive*. Who do you think? oh, my brother!"

"Speak!"

"Edith Brandon was the name he named."

"Be calm, Frank; I made inquiries myself at the island registry-office. The clerk told me this story, but said that the woman who had charge of the dead asserted that the grave was opened, and it was ascertained that absolute death had taken place."

"Alas!" said Frank, in a voice of despair, "I saw that woman—the keeper of the dead-house—the grave-digger's wife. She told me this story, but it was with a troubled eye. I swore vengeance on her unless she told me the truth. She was alarmed, and said she would reveal all she knew if I swore to keep it to myself. I swore it. Can you bear to hear it, Louis?"

"Speak!"

"She said only this: 'When the grave was opened it was found that Edith Brandon had not been dead when she was buried.'"

Louis groaned, and, falling forward, buried his head in both his hands.

It was a long time before either of them spoke. At last Louis, without lifting his head, said:

"Go on."

"When I left the island I went to Quebec, but could not stay there. It was too near the place of horror. I went up the river, working my way as a laborer, to Montreal. I then sought for work, and obtained employment as porter in a warehouse. What mattered it? What was rank or station to me? I only wanted to keep myself from starvation and get a bed to sleep on at night.

"I had no hope or thought of any thing. The horrors through which I had passed were enough to fill my mind. Yet above them all one horror was predominant, and never through the days and nights that have since elapsed has my soul ceased to quiver at the echo of two terrible words which have never ceased to ring through my brain—'Buried alive!'

"I lived on in Montreal, under an assumed name, as a common porter, and might have been living there yet; but one day as I came in I heard the name of 'Brandon.' Two of the clerks who were discussing the news in the morning paper happened to speak of an advertisement which had long been in the papers in all parts of Canada. It was for information about the Brandon family.

"I read the notice. It seemed to me at first that Potts was still trying to get control of us, but a moment's reflection showed that to be improbable. Then the mention of 'the friends of the family' made me think of Langhetti. I concluded that he had escaped death and was trying to find me out.

"I went to Toronto, and found that you had gone to New York. I had saved much of my wages, and was able to come here. I expected Langhetti, but found you."

"Why did you not think that it might be me?"

"Because I heard a threat of Potts about you, and took it for granted that he would succeed in carrying it out."

"What was the threat?"

"He found out somehow that my father had written a letter to you. I suppose they told him so at the village post-office. One day when he was in the room he said, with a laugh, alluding to the letter, 'I'll uncork that young Brandy-flask before long.'"

"Well—the notice of my death appeared in the English papers."

Frank looked earnestly at him.

"And I accept it, and go under an assumed name."

"So do I. It is better."

"You thought Langhetti alive. Do you think he is?"

"I do not think so now."

"Why not?"

"The efforts which he made were enough to kill any man without the plague. He must have died."

After hearing Frank's story Louis gave a full account of his own adventures, omitting, however, all mention of Beatrice. That was something for his own heart, and not for another's ear.

"Have you the letter and MS.?"

"Yes."

"Let me read them."

Louis took the treasures and handed them to Frank. He read them in silence.

"Is Cato with you yet?"

"Yes."

"It is well."

"And now, Frank," said Louis, "you have something at last to live for."

"What is that?"

"Vengeance!" cried Louis, with burning eyes.

"Vengeance!" repeated Frank, without emotion—"Vengeance! What is that to me? Do you hope to give peace to your own heart by inflicting suffering on our enemies? What can they possibly suffer that can atone for what they have inflicted? All that they can feel is as nothing compared with what we have felt. Vengeance!" he repeated, musingly; "and what sort of vengeance? Would you kill them? What would that effect? Would he be more miserable than he is? Or would you feel any greater happiness? Or do you mean something more far-reaching than death?"

"Death," said Louis, "is nothing for such crimes as his."

"You want to inflict suffering, then, and you ask me. Well, after all, do I want him to suffer? Do I care for this man's sufferings? What are they or what can they be to me? He stands on his own plane, far beneath me; he is a coarse animal, who can, perhaps, suffer from nothing but physical pain. Should I inflict that on him, what good would it be to me? And yet there is none other that I can inflict."

"Langhetti must have transformed you," said Louis, "with his spiritual ideas."

"Langhetti; or perhaps the fact that I three times gazed upon the face of death and stood upon the threshold of that place where dwells the Infinite Mystery. So when you speak of mere vengeance my heart does not respond. But there is still something which may make a purpose as strong as vengeance."

"Name it."

"The sense of intolerable wrong!" cried Frank, in vehement tones; "the presence of that foul pair in the home of our ancestors, our own exile, and all the sufferings of the past! Do you think that I can endure this?"

"No—you must have vengeance."

"No; not vengeance."

"What then?"

"Justice!" cried Frank, starting to his feet. "Justice—strict, stern, merciless; and that justice means to me all that you mean by vengeance. Let us make war against him from this time forth while life lasts; let us cast him out and get back our own; let us put him into the power of the law, and let that take satisfaction on him for his crimes; let us cast him out and fling him from us to that power which can fittingly condemn. I

despise him, and despise his sufferings. His agony will give me no gratification. The anguish that a base nature can suffer is only disgusting to me—he suffers only out of his baseness. To me, and with a thing like that, vengeance is impossible, and justice is enough."

"At any rate you will have a purpose, and your purpose points to the same result as mine."

"But how is this possible?" said Frank. "He is strong, and we are weak. What can we do?"

"We can try," said Louis. "You are ready to undertake any thing. You do not value your life. There is one thing which is before us. It is desperate—it is almost hopeless; but we are both ready to try it."

"What is that?"

"The message from the dead," said Louis, spreading before Frank that letter from the treasure-ship which he himself had so often read.

"And are you going to try this?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I don't know. I must first find out the resources of science."

"Have you Cato yet?"

"Yes."

"Can he dive?"

"He was brought up on the Malabar coast, among the pearl-fishers, and can remain under water for an incredible space of time. But I hope to find means which will enable me myself to go down under the ocean depths. This will be our object now. If it succeeds, then we can gain our purpose; if not, we must think of something else."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DIVING BUSINESS.

In a little street that runs from Broadway, not far from Wall Street, there was a low doorway with dingy panes of glass, over which was a sign which bore the following letters, somewhat faded:

BROCKET & CO.,
CONTRACTORS.

About a month after his arrival at New York Brandon entered this place and walked up to the desk, where a stout, thick-set man was sitting, with his chin on his hands and his elbows on the desk before him.

"Mr. Brocket?" said Brandon, inquiringly.

"Yes, Sir," answered the other, descending from his stool and stepping forward toward Brandon, behind a low table which stood by the desk.

"I am told that you undertake contracts for raising sunken vessels?"

"We are in that line of business."

"You have to make use of diving apparatus?"

"Yes."

"I understand that you have gone into this business to a larger extent than any one in America?"

"Yes, Sir," said Brocket, modestly. "I think we do the leading business in that line."

"I will tell you frankly my object in calling upon you. I have just come from the East Indies for the purpose of organizing a systematic plan for the pearl fisheries. You are aware that out there they still cling to the old fashion of diving, which was begun three thousand years ago. I wish to see if I can not bring science to bear upon it, so as to raise the pearl-oysters in larger quantities."

"That's a good idea of yours," remarked Mr. Brocket, thoughtfully.

"I came to you to see if you could inform me whether it would be practicable or not."

"Perfectly so," said Brocket.

"Do you work with the diving-bell in your business or with armor?"

"With both. We use the diving-bell for stationary purposes; but when it is necessary to move about we employ armor."

"Is the armor adapted to give a man any freedom of movement?"

"The armor is far better than the bell. The armor is so perfect now that a practiced hand can move about under water with a freedom that is surprising. My men go down to examine sunken ships. They go in and out and all through them. Sometimes this is the most profitable part of our business."

"Why so?"

"Why, because there is often money or valuable articles on board, and these always are ours. See," said Brocket, opening a drawer and taking out some silver coin, "here is some money that we found in an old Dutch vessel that was sunk up the Hudson a hundred years ago. Our men walked about the bed of the river till they found her, and in her cabin they obtained a sum of money that would surprise you—all old coin."

"An old Dutch vessel! Do you often find vessels that have been sunk so long ago?"

"Not often. But we are always on the look-out for them," said Brocket, who had now grown quite communicative. "You see, those old ships always carried ready cash—they didn't use bank-notes and bills of exchange. So if you can only find one you're sure of money."

"Then this would be a good thing to bear in mind in our pearl enterprises?"

"Of course. I should think that out there some reefs must be full of sunken ships. They've been sinking about those coasts ever since the first ship was built."

"How far down can a diver go in armor?"

"Oh, any reasonable depth, when the pressure of the water is not too great. Some pain in the ears is felt at first from the compressed air, but that is temporary. Men can easily go down as far as fifteen or sixteen fathoms."

"How long can they stay down?"

"In the bells, you know, they go down and are pulled up only in the middle of the day and at evening, when their work is done."

"How with the men in armor?"

"Oh, they can stand it almost as well. They come up oftener, though. There is one advantage in the armor: a man can fling off his weight and come up whenever he likes."

"Have you ever been down yourself?"

"Oh yes—oftener than any of my men. I'm the oldest diver in the country, I think. But I don't go down often now. It's hard work, and I'm getting old."

"Is it much harder than other work?"

"Well, you see, it's unnatural sort of work, and is hard on the lungs. Still, I always was healthy. The real reason why I stopped was a circumstance that happened two years ago."

"What was that?"

Brocket drew a long breath, looked for a moment meditatively at the floor, and then went on:

"Well, there happened to be a wreck of a steamer called the *Saladin* down off the North Carolina coast, and I thought I would try her as a speculation, for I supposed that there might be considerable money on board one way or another. It was a very singular affair. Only two men had escaped; it was so sudden. They said the vessel struck a rock at night when the water was perfectly still, and went down in a few minutes, before the passengers could even be awakened. It may seem horrid to you, but you must know that a ship-load of passengers is very profitable, for they all carry money. Besides, there are their trunks, and the clerk's desk, and so on. So, this time, I went down myself. The ship lay on one side of the rock which had pierced her, having floated off just before sinking; and I had no difficulty in getting on board. After walking about the deck I went at once into the saloon. Sir," said Brocket, with an awful look at Brandon, "if I should live for a hundred years I should never forget the sight that I saw. A hundred passengers or more had been on board, and most of them had rushed out of their state-rooms as the vessel began to sink. Very many of them lay on the floor, a frightful multitude of dead.

"But there were others," continued Brocket, in a lower tone, "who had clutched at pieces of furniture, at the doors, and at the chairs, and many of these had held on with such a rigid clutch that death itself had not unlocked it. Some were still upright, with distorted features, and staring eyes, clinging, with frantic faces, to the nearest object that they had seen. Several of them stood around the table. The most frightful thing was this: that they were all staring at the door.

"But the worst one of all was a corpse that was on the saloon table. The wretch had leaped there in his first mad impulse, and his hands had clutched a brass bar that ran across. He was facing the door; his hands were still clinging, his eyes glared at me, his jaw had fallen. The hideous face seemed grimacing at and threatening me. As I entered the water was disturbed by my motion. An undulation set in movement by my entrance passed through the length of the saloon. All the corpses swayed for a moment. I stopped in horror. Scarcely had I stopped when the corpses, agitated by the motion of the water and swaying, lost their hold; their fingers slipped, and they fell forward simultaneously. Above all, that hideous figure on the table, as its fingers were loosened, in falling forward, seemed to take steps, with his demon face still staring at me. My blood ran cold. It seemed to me as though these devils were all rushing at me, led on by that fiend on the table. For the first time in my life, Sir, I felt fear under the sea. I started back, and rushed out quaking as though all hell was behind me. When I got up to the surface I could not speak. I instantly left the *Saladin*, came home with my men, and have never been down myself since."

A long conversation followed about the general condition of sunken ships. Brocket had no fear of rivals in business, and as his interlocutor did not pretend to be one he was exceedingly communicative. He described to him the exact depth to which a diver in armor might safely go, the longest time that he could safely remain under water, the rate of travel in walking along a smooth bottom, and the distance which one could walk. He told him how to go on board of a wrecked ship with the least risk or difficulty, and the best mode by which to secure any valuables which he might find. At last he became so exceedingly friendly that Brandon asked him if he would be willing to give personal instructions to himself, hinting that money was no object, and that any price would be paid.

At this Brocket laughed. "My dear Sir, you take my fancy, for I think I see in you a man of the right sort. I should be very glad to show any one like you how to go to work. Don't mention money; I have actually got more now than I know what to do with, and I'm thinking of founding an asylum for the poor. I'll sell you any number of suits of armor, if you want them, merely in the way of business; but if I give you instructions it will be merely because I like to oblige a man like you."

Brandon of course expressed all the gratitude that so generous an offer could excite.

"But there's no use trying just yet; wait till the month of May, and then you can begin. You have nerve, and I have no doubt that you'll learn fast."

After this interview Brandon had many others. To give credibility to his pretended plan for the pearl fisheries, he bought a dozen suits of diving armor and various articles which Brocket assured him that he would need. He also brought Cato with him one day, and the Hindu described the plan which the pearl-divers pursued on the Malabar coast. According to Cato each diver had a stone which weighed about thirty pounds tied to his foot, and a sponge filled with oil fastened around his neck. On plunging into the water, the weight carried him down. When the diver reached the bottom the oiled sponge was used from time to time to enable him to breathe by inhaling the air through the sponge applied to his mouth. All this was new to Brocket. It excited his ardor.

The month of May at last came. Brocket showed them a place in the Hudson, about twenty miles above the city, where they could practice. Under his direction Brandon put on the armor and went down. Frank worked the pumps which supplied him with air, and Cato managed the boat. The two Brandons learned their parts rapidly, and Louis, who had the hardest task, improved so quickly, and caught the idea of the work so readily, that Brocket enthusiastically assured him that he was a natural-born diver.

All this time Brandon was quietly making arrangements for a voyage. He gradually obtained every thing which might by any possibility be required, and which he found out by long deliberations with Frank and by hints which he gained by well-managed questions to Brocket.

Thus the months of May and June passed until at length they were ready to start.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ISLET OF SANTA CRUZ.

It was July when Brandon left New York for San Salvador.

He had purchased a beautiful little schooner, which he had fitted up like a gentleman's yacht, and stored with all the articles which might be needed. In cruising about the Bahama Isles he intended to let it be supposed that he was traveling for pleasure. True, the month of July was not the time of the year which pleasure-seekers would choose for sailing in the West Indies, but of this he did not take much thought.

The way to the Bahama Isles was easy. They stopped for a while at Nassau, and then went to San Salvador.

The first part of the New World which Columbus discovered is now but seldom visited, and few inhabitants are found there. Only six hundred people dwell upon it, and these have in general but little intelligence. On reaching this place Brandon sailed to the harbor which Columbus entered, and made many inquiries about that immortal landing. Traditions still survived among the people, and all were glad to show the rich Englishman the lions of the place.

He was thus enabled to make inquiries without exciting suspicion about the islands lying to the north. He was informed that about four leagues north there was an island named Guahi, and as there was no island known in that direction named Santa Cruz, Brandon thought that this might be the one. He asked if there were any small islets or sand-banks near there, but no one could tell him. Having gained all the information that he could he pursued his voyage.

In that hot season there was but little wind. The seas were visited by profound calms which continued long and rendered navigation slow and tedious. Sometimes, to prevent themselves from being swept away by the currents, they had to cast anchor. At other times they were forced to keep in close by the shore. They waited till the night came on, and then, putting out the sweeps, they rowed the yacht slowly along.

It was the middle of July before they reached the island of Guahi, which Brandon thought might be Santa Cruz. If so, then one league due north of this there ought to be the islet of the Three Needles. Upon the discovery of that would depend their fate.

It was evening when they reached the southern shore of Guahi. Now was the time when all the future depended upon the fact of the existence of an islet to the north. That night on the south shore was passed in deep anxiety. They rowed the vessel on with their sweeps, but the island was too large to be passed in one night. Morning came, and still they rowed.

The morning passed, and the hot sun burned down upon them, yet they still toiled on, seeking to pass beyond a point which lay ahead, so as to see the open water to the north. Gradually they neared it, and the sea-view in front opened up more and more widely. There was nothing but water. More and more of the view exposed itself, until at last the whole horizon was visible. Yet there was no land there—no island—no sign of those three rocks which they longed so much to find.

A light wind arose which enabled them to sail over all the space that lay one league to the north. They sounded as they went, but found only deep water. They looked all around, but found not so much as the smallest point of land above the surface of the ocean.

That evening they cast anchor and went ashore at the island of Guahi to see if any one knew of other islands among which might be found one named Santa Cruz. Their disappointment was profound. Brandon for a while thought that perhaps some other San Salvador was meant in the letter. This very idea had occurred to him before, and he had made himself acquainted with all the places of that name that existed. None of them seemed, however, to answer the requirements of the writing. Some must have gained the name since; others were so situated that no island could be mentioned as lying to the north. On the whole, it seemed to him that this San Salvador of Columbus could alone be mentioned. It was alluded to as a well-known place, of which particular description was unnecessary, and no other place at that day had this character except the one on which he had decided.

One hope yet remained, a faint one, but still a hope, and this might yet be realized. It was that Guahi was not Santa Cruz; but that some other island lay about here, which might be considered as north from San Salvador. This could be ascertained here in Guahi better perhaps than any where else. With this faint hope he landed.

Guahi is only a small island, and there are but few inhabitants upon it, who support themselves partly by fishing. In this delightful climate their wants are not numerous, and the rich soil produces almost any thing which they desire. The fish about here are not plentiful, and what they catch have to be sought for at a long distance off.

"Are there any other islands near this?" asked Brandon of some people whom he met on landing.

"Not very near."

"Which is the nearest?"

"San Salvador."

"Are there any others in about this latitude?"

"Well, there is a small one about twelve leagues east. There are no people on it though."

"What is its name?"

"Santa Cruz."

Brandon's heart beat fast at the sound of that name. It must be so. It must be the island which he sought. It lay to the north of San Salvador, and its name was Santa Cruz.

"It is not down on the charts?"

"No. It is only a small islet."

Another confirmation, for the message said plainly an islet, whereas Guahi was an island.

"How large is it?"

"Oh, perhaps a mile or a mile and a half long."

"Is there any other island near it?"

"I don't know."

"Have you ever been there?"

"No."

Plainly no further information could be gathered here. It was enough to have hope strengthened and an additional chance for success. Brandon obtained as near as possible the exact direction of Santa Cruz, and, going back to the yacht, took advantage of the light breeze which still was blowing and set sail.

Night came on very dark, but the breeze still

"AN ISLAND COVERED WITH PALM-TREES LAY THERE."

continued to send its light breath, and before this the vessel gently glided on. Not a thing could be seen in that intense darkness. Toward morning Louis Brandon, who had remained up all night in his deep anxiety, tried to pierce through the gloom as he strained his eyes, and seemed as though he would force the darkness to reveal that which he sought. But the darkness gave no token.

Not Columbus himself, when looking out over these waters, gazed with greater eagerness, nor did his heart beat with greater anxiety of suspense, than that which Brandon felt as his vessel glided slowly through the dark waters, the same over which Columbus had passed, and moved amidst the impenetrable gloom. But the long night of suspense glided by at last; the darkness faded, and the dawn came.

Frank Brandon, on waking about sunrise, came up and saw his brother looking with fixed intensity of gaze at something directly in front. He turned to see what it might be.

An island covered with palm-trees lay there. Its extent was small, but it was filled with the rich verdure of the tropics. The gentle breeze ruffled the waters, but did not altogether efface the reflection of that beautiful islet.

Louis pointed toward the northeast.

Frank looked.

It seemed to be about two miles away. It was a low sand island about a quarter of a mile long. From its surface projected three rocks thin and sharp. They were at unequal distances from each other, and in the middle of the islet. The tallest one might have been about twelve feet in height, the others eight and ten feet respectively.

Louis and Frank exchanged one long look, but said not a word. That look was an eloquent one.

This then was unmistakably the place of their search.

The islet with the three rocks like needles lying north of Santa Cruz. One league due north of this was the spot where now rested all their hopes.

The island of Santa Cruz was, as had been told them, not more than a mile and a half in length, the sand island with the needles lay about two miles north of it. On the side of Santa Cruz which lay nearest to them was a small cove just large enough for the yacht. Here, after some delay, they were able to enter and land.

The tall trees that covered the island rose over beautiful glades and grassy slopes. Too small and too remote to give support to any number of inhabitants, it had never been touched by the hand of man, but stood before them in all that pristine beauty with which nature had first en-

dowed it. It reminded Brandon in some degree of that African island where he had passed some time with Beatrice. The recollection of this brought over him an intolerable melancholy, and made the very beauty of this island painful to him. Yet hope was now strong within his heart, and as he traversed its extent his eye wandered about in search of places where he might be able to conceal the treasure that lay under the sea, if he were ever able to recover it from its present place. The island afforded many spots which were well adapted to such a purpose.

In the centre of the island a rock jutted up, which was bald and flat on its summit. On the western side it showed a precipice of some forty or fifty feet in height, and on the eastern side it descended to the water in a steep slope. The tall trees which grew all around shrouded it from the view of those at sea, but allowed the sea to be visible on every side. Climbing to this place, they saw something which showed them that they could not hope to carry on any operations for that day.

On the other side of the island, about ten miles from the shore, there lay a large brig becalmed. It looked like one of those vessels that are in the trade between the United States and the West Indies. As long as that vessel was in the neighborhood it would not do even to make a beginning, nor did Brandon care about letting his yacht be seen. Whatever he did he wished to do secretly.

The brig continued in sight all day, and they remained on the island. Toward evening they took the small boat and rowed out to the sand-bank which they called Needle Islet. It was merely a low spit of sand, with these three singularly-shaped rocks projecting upward. There was nothing else whatever to be seen upon it. The moon came up as they stood there, and their eyes wandered involuntarily to the north, to that place, a league away, where the treasure lay beneath the waters.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OCEAN DEPTHS.

THE next morning dawned and Brandon hurried to the rock and looked around. During the night a slight wind had sprung up, and was still gently breathing. Far over the wide sea there was not a sail to be seen. The brig had passed away. They were finally left to themselves.

Now at last the time of trial had come. They were eager to make the attempt, and soon the yacht was unmoored, and moved slowly out to sea in the direction of Needle Island. A light breeze still blew fitfully, but promised at any moment to stop; yet while it lasted they passed onward under its gentle impulse, and so gradually reached Needle Island, and went on into the sea beyond.

Before they had come to the spot which they wished to attain the breeze had died out, and they were compelled to take to the oars. Although early in the morning the sun was burning hot, the work was laborious, and the progress was slow. Yet not a murmur was heard, nor did a single thought of fatigue enter the minds of any of them. One idea only was present—one so overwhelming that all lesser thoughts and all ordinary feelings were completely obliterated. After two hours of steady labor they at last reached a place which seemed to them to be exactly one league due north of Needle Islet. Looking back they saw that the rocks on the island seemed, from this distance closer together, and thinner and sharper, so that they actually bore a greater resemblance to needles from this point than to any thing else.

Here they sounded. The water was fifteen fathoms deep—not so great a depth as they had feared. Then they put down the anchor, for although there was no wind, yet the yacht might be caught in some current, and drift gradually away from the right position.

The small boat had all this time been floating astern with the pumping apparatus in it, so that the adventurous diver might readily be accompanied in his search and his wanderings at the bottom of the sea.

But there was the prospect that this search would be long and arduous, and Brandon was not willing to exhaust himself too soon. He had already resolved that the first exploration should be made by Asgeelo. The Hindu had followed Brandon in all his wanderings with that silent submission and perfect devotion which is more common among Hindus than any other people. He had the air of one who was satisfied with obeying his master, and did not ask the end of any commands which might be given. He was aware that they were about to explore the ocean depths, but showed no curiosity about the object of their search. It was Brandon's purpose to send him down first at different points, so that he might see if there was any thing there which looked like what they sought.

Asgeelo—or Cato, as Brandon commonly called him—had made those simple preparations which are common among his class. The apparatus which the pearl-divers have used ever since pearl-diving first commenced. Twelve or fifteen stones were in the boat, a flask of oil, and a sponge which was fastened around his neck. These were all that he required. Each stone weighed about thirty pounds. One of these he tied around one foot; he saturated the sponge with oil, so as to use it to inhale air beneath the water; and then, standing on the edge of the boat and flinging his arms straight up over his head, he leaped into the water and went down feet foremost.

Over the smooth water the ripples flowed from the spot where Asgeelo had disappeared, extending in successive concentric circles, and radiating in long undulations far and wide. Louis and Frank waited in deep suspense. Asgeelo remained long beneath the water, but to them the time seemed frightful in its duration. Profound anxiety began to mingle with the suspense, for fear lest the faithful servant in his devotion had overrated his powers—lest the disuse of his early practice had weakened his skill—lest the weight bound to his foot had dragged him down and kept him there forever.

At last, when the suspense had become intolerable and the two had already begun to exchange glances almost of despair, a plash was heard, and Asgeelo emerged far to the right. He struck out strongly toward the boat, which was at once rowed toward him. In a few minutes he was taken in. He did not appear to be much exhausted.

He had seen nothing.

"A DARK, SINEWY ARM EMERGED FROM BENEATH, ARMED WITH A LONG, KEEN KNIFE."

They then rowed about a hundred yards further, and Asgeelo prepared to descend once more. He squeezed the oil out of the sponge and renewed it again. But this time he took a knife in his hand.

"What is that for?" asked Frank and Louis.

"Sharks!" answered Cato, in a terrible tone.

At this Louis and Frank exchanged glances. Could they let this devoted servant thus tempt so terrible a death?

"Did you see any sharks?" asked Louis.

"No, Sahib."

"Why do you fear them, then?"

"I don't fear them, Sahib."

"Why do you take this knife?"

"One may come, Sahib."

After some hesitation Asgeelo was allowed to go. As before he plunged into the water, and remained underneath quite as long; but now they had become familiarized with his powers and the suspense was not dreadful. At the expiration of the usual time he reappeared, and on being taken into the boat he again announced that he had seen nothing.

They now rowed a hundred yards farther on in the same direction, toward the east, and Asgeelo made another descent. He came back with the same result.

It began to grow discouraging, but Asgeelo was not yet fatigued, and they therefore determined to let him work as long as he was able. He went down seven times more. They still kept the boat on toward the east till the line of "needles" on the sand island had become thrown farther apart and stood at long distances. Asgeelo came up each time unsuccessful.

He at last went down for the eleventh time. They were talking as usual, not expecting that he would reappear for some minutes, when suddenly a shout was heard, and Asgeelo's head emerged from the water not more than twenty yards from the boat. He was swimming with one hand, and in the other he held an uplifted knife, which he occasionally brandished in the air and splashed in the water.

Immediately the cause of this became manifest. Just behind him a sharp black fin appeared cutting the surface of the water.

It was a shark! But the monster, a coward like all his tribe, deterred by the plashing of the water made by Asgeelo, circled round him and hesitated to seize his prey.

The moment was frightful. Yet Asgeelo appeared not in the least alarmed. He swam slowly, occasionally turning his head and watching the monster, evading by his easy dexterity to be almost as much in his native element as his pursuer, with his eyes fixed on him and holding his knife in a firm clasp. The knife was a long, keen blade, which Asgeelo had carried with him for years.

Louis and Frank could do nothing. A pistol ball could not reach this monster, who kept himself under the water where a ball would be spent before striking, and if indeed any aim could direct a bullet toward that swift darting figure. They had nothing to do but to look on in an agony of horror.

Asgeelo, compelled to watch, to guard, to splash the water, and to turn frequently, made but a slow passage over those twenty yards which separated him from the boat. At last it seemed as if he chose to stay there. It seemed to those who watched him with such awful horror that he

might have escaped had he chosen, but that he had some idea of voluntarily encountering the monster. This became evident at last, as the shark passed before him when they saw Asgeelo's face turned toward it; a face full of fierce hate and vengeance; a face such as one turns toward some mortal enemy.

He made a quick, fierce stroke with his long knife. The shark gave a leap upward. The water was tinged with blood. The next moment Asgeelo went down.

"What now?" was the thought of the brothers. Had he been dragged down? Impossible! And yet it seemed equally impossible that he could have gone down of his own accord.

In a moment their suspense was ended. A white flash appeared near the surface. The next instant a dark, sinewy arm emerged from beneath, armed with a long, keen knife, which seemed to tear down with one tremendous stroke that white, shining surface.

It was Asgeelo's head that emerged in a sea of blood and foam. Triumph was in his dark face, as with one hand he waved his knife exultantly.

A few moments afterward the form of a gigantic shark floated upward to the surface, dyeing the sea with the blood which had issued from the stroke dealt by Asgeelo. Not yet, however, was the vindictive fury of the Hindu satiated. He swam up to it. He dashed his knife over and over the white belly till it became a hideous mass of gaping entrails. Then he came into the boat.

He sat down, a hideous figure. Blood covered his tawny face, and the fury of his rage had not left the features.

The strength which this man had shown was tremendous, yet his quickness and agility even in the water had been commensurate with his strength. Brandon had once seen proofs of his courage in the dead bodies of the Malay pirates which lay around him in the cabin of that ill-fated Chinese ship; but all that he had done then was not to be compared to this.

They could not help asking him why he had not at once made his escape to the boat, instead of staying to fight the monster.

Asgeelo's look was as gloomy as death as he replied,

"They tore in pieces my son, Sahib—my only son—when he first went down, and I have to avenge him. I killed a hundred on the Malabar coast before I left it forever. That shark did not attack me; I attacked him."

"If you saw one now would you attack him?"

"Yes, Sahib."

Brandon expressed some apprehension, and wished him not to risk his life.

But Asgeelo explained that a shark could be successfully encountered by a skillful swimmer. The shark is long, and has to move about in a circle which is comparatively large; he is also a coward, and a good swimmer can strike him if he only chooses. He spoke in repeated triumphantly that he had killed more than a hundred to avenge his son.

In his last venture he had been no more successful than before. Speedy Island was now to the southwest, and Brandon thought that their only chance was to try farther over toward the west, where they had not yet explored.

They rowed at once back to the point from which they had set out, and then went on about a hundred and fifty yards to the west. From this place, as they looked toward the islet, the three rocks seemed so close together that they appeared blended, and the three sharp, needle-like points appeared to issue from one common base. This circumstance had an encouraging effect, for it seemed to the brothers as though their ancestor might have looked upon those rocks from this point of view rather than from any other which had as yet come upon the field of their observation.

This time Brandon himself resolved to go down; partly because he thought that Asgeelo had worked long enough, and ought not to be exhausted on that first day, and partly on account of an intolerable impatience, and an eagerness to see for himself rather than intrust it to others.

There was the horror of the shark, which might have deterred any other man. It was a danger which he had never taken into account. But the resolve of his soul was stronger than any fear, and he determined to face even this danger. If he lost his life, he was indifferent. Let it go! Life was not so precious to him as to some others. Fearless by nature, he was ordinarily ready to run risks; but now the thing that drew him onward was so vast in its importance that he was willing to encounter peril of any kind.

Frank was aware of the full extent of this new danger, but he said nothing, nor did he attempt in any way to dissuade his brother. He himself, had he been able, would have gone down in his place; but as he was not able, he did not suppose that his brother would hesitate.

The apparatus was in the boat. The pumping-machine was in the stern; and this, with the various signal-ropes, was managed by Frank. Asgeelo rowed. These arrangements had long since been made, and they had practiced in this way on the Hudson River.

Silently Brandon put on his diving armor. The ropes and tubes were all carefully arranged. The usual weight was attached to his belt, and he was slowly lowered down to the bottom of the sea.

The bottom of the ocean was composed of a smooth, even surface of fine sand and gravel, along which Brandon moved without difficulty. The cumbrous armor of the diver, which on land is so heavy, beneath the water loses its excessive weight, and by steadying the wearer assists him to walk. The water was marvelously transparent, as is usually the case in the southern seas, and through the glass plate in his helmet Brandon could look forward to a greater distance than was possible in the Hudson.

Overhead he could see the bottom of the boat, as it floated and moved on in the direction which he wished; signals, which were communicated by a rope which he held in his hand, told them whether to go forward or backward, to the right or to the left, or to stop altogether. Practice had enabled him to command, and them to obey, with ease.

Down in the depths to which he had descended the water was always still, and the storms that affected the surface never penetrated there. Brandon learned this from the delicate shells and the still more delicate forms of marine plants which

lay at his feet, so fragile in their structure, and so delicately poised in their position, that they must have formed themselves in deep, dead stillness and absolute motionlessness of waters. The very movement which was caused by his passage displaced them in all directions, and cast them down every where in ruins. Here, in such depths as these, if the sounding lead is cast it brings up these fragile shells, and shows to the observer what profound calm must exist here, far away beneath the ordinary vision of man.

Practice had enabled Brandon to move with much ease. His breathing was without difficulty. The first troubles arising from breathing this confined air had long since been surmounted. One tube ran down from the boat, through which the fresh air was pushed, and another tube ran up a little distance, through which the air passed and left it in myriad bubbles that ascended to the surface.

He walked on, and soon came to a place where things changed their appearance. Hard sand was here, and on every side there arose curiously-shaped coral structures, which resembled more than any thing else a leafless forest. These coral tree-like forms twisted their branches in strange involutions, and in some places formed a perfect barrier of interlaced arms, so that he was forced to make a detour in order to avoid them. The chief fear here was that his tube might get entangled among some of the loftier straggling branches, and impede or retard his progress. To avoid this caused much delay.

Now, among the coral rocks, the vegetation of the lower sea began to appear of more vivid colors and of far greater variety than any which he had ever seen. Here were long plants which clung to the coral like ivy, seeming to be a species of marine parasite, and as it grew it throve more luxuriantly. Here were some which threw out long arms, terminating in vast, broad, palm-like leaves, the arms intertwined among the coral branches and the leaves hanging downward. Here were long streamers of fine, silk-like strings, that were suspended from many a projecting branch, and hillocks of spongy substance that looked like moss. Here, too, were plants which threw forth long, ribbon-like leaves of variegated color.

It was a forest under the sea, and it grew denser at every step.

At last his progress in this direction was terminated by a rock which came from a southerly direction, like a spur from the islands. It arose to a height of about thirty feet overhead, and descended gradually as it ran north. Brandon turned aside, and walked by its base along its entire extent.

At its termination there arose a long vista, where the ground ascended and an opening appeared through this marine "forest." On each side the involuted corals flung their twisted arms in more curious and intricate folds. The vegetation was denser, more luxuriant, and more varied. Beneath him was a growth of tender substance, hairy in texture, and of a delicate green color, which looked more like lawn grass of the upper world than any thing else in nature.

Brandon walked on, and even in the intense desire of his soul to find what he sought he felt himself overcome by the sublime influence of this submarine world. He seemed to have intruded into some other sphere, planting his rash footsteps where no foot of man had trodden before, and using the resources of science to violate the hallowed secrecy of awful nature in her most hidden retreats. Here, above all things, his soul was oppressed by the universal silence around. Through that thick helmet, indeed, no sound under a clap of thunder could be heard, and the ringing of his ears would of itself have prevented consciousness of any other noise, yet none the less was he aware of the awful stillness; it was silence that could be felt. In the sublimity of that lonely pathway he felt what Hercules is imagined to have felt when passing to the underworld after Cerberus,

Stupent ubi undae segne torpescit fretum,

and half expected to hear some voice from the dweller in this place:

"Quo pergis audax? Siste proserentem gradum."

There came to him only such dwellers as belonged to the place. He saw them as he moved along. He saw them darting out from the hidden penetralia around, moving swiftly across and sometimes darting in shoals before him. They began to appear in such vast numbers that Brandon thought of that monster which lay a mangled heap upon the surface above, and fancied that perhaps his kindred were here waiting to avenge his death. As this fear came full and well defined before him he drew from his belt the knife which Asgeelo had given him, and Frank had urged him to take, feeling himself less helpless if he held this in his hand.

The fishes moved about him, coming on in new and more startled crowds, some dashing past, others darting upward, and others moving swiftly ahead. One large one was there with a train of followers, which moved up and floated for a moment directly in front of him, its large, staring eyes seeming to view him in wonder, and solemnly working its gills. But as Brandon came close it gave a sudden turn and darted off with all its attendants.

At last, amidst all these wonders, he saw far ahead something which drove all other thoughts away, whether of fear, or of danger, or of horror, and filled all his soul with an overmastering passion of desire and hope.

It was a dark object, too remote as yet to be distinctly visible, yet as it rose there his fancy seemed to trace the outline of a ship, or what might once have been a ship. The presentation of his hope before him thus in what seemed like a reality was too much. He stood still, and his heart beat with fierce throbs.

The hope was so precious that for a time he hesitated to advance, for fear lest the hope might be dispelled forever. And then to fail at this place, after so long a search, when he seemed to have reached the end, would be an intolerable grief.

There, too, was that strange pathway which seemed made on purpose. How came it there? He thought that perhaps the object lying before him might have caused some current which set in there and prevented the growth of plants in that place. These and many other thoughts came to him as he stood, unwilling to move.

But at last he conquered his feelings, and advanced. Hope grew strong within him. He thought of the time on Coffin Island when, in like manner, he had hesitated before a like object.

Might not this, like that, turn out to be a ship? And now, by a strange revulsion, all his feelings urged him on; hope was strong, suspense unendurable. Whatever that object was, he must know.

It might indeed be a rock. He had passed one shortly before, which had gradually declined into the bottom of the sea; this might be a continuation of the same, which after an interval had arisen again from the bottom. It was long and high at one end, and rounded forward at the other. Such a shape was perfectly natural for a rock. He tried to crush down hope, so as to be prepared for disappointment. He tried to convince himself that it must be a rock, and could by no possibility be any thing else. Yet his efforts were totally fruitless. Still the conviction remained that it was a ship, and if so, it could be no other than the one he sought.

As he went on all the marine vegetation ceased. The coral rocks continued no further. Now all around the bottom of the sea was flat, and covered with fine gravel, like that which he had touched when he first came down. The fishes had departed. The sense of solemnity left him; only one thing was perceptible, and that was the object toward which he walked.

And now he felt within him such an uncontrollable impulse that even if he had wished he could neither have paused nor gone back. To go forward was only possible. It seemed to him as though some external influence had penetrated his body, and forced him to move. Again, as once before, he recalled the last words of his father, so well remembered:

—"If in that other world to which I am going the disembodied spirit can assist man, then be sure, oh my son, I will assist you, and in the crisis of your fate I will be near, if it is only to communicate to your spirit what you ought to do—"

It was Ralph Brandon who had said this. Here in this object which lay before him, if it were indeed the ship, he imagined the spirit of another Ralph Brandon present, awaiting him.

Suddenly a dark shadow passed over his head, which forced him involuntarily to look up. In spite of his excitement a shudder passed through him. Far overhead, at the surface of the sea, the boat was floating. But half-way up were three dark objects moving slowly and lazily along. They were sharks.

To him, in his loneliness and weakness, nothing ever seemed so menacing as these three demons of the deep as he saw them up at them. Had they seen him? that was his thought. He clutched his knife in a firmer hold, feeling all the while how utterly helpless he was, and shrinking away into himself from the terror above. The monsters moved leisurely about, at one time grazing the tube, and sending down a vibration which thrilled like an electric shock through him. For a moment he thought that they were malignantly tormenting him, and had done this on purpose in order to send down to him a message of his fate.

He waited.

The time seemed endless. Yet at last the end came. The sharks could not have seen him, for they gradually moved away until they were out of sight.

Brandon did not dare to advance for some time. Yet now, since the spell of this presence was removed, his horror left him, and his former hope animated all his soul.

There lay that object before him. Could he advance again after that warning? Dared he? This new realm into which he had ventured had indeed those who were ready and able to inflict a sudden and frightful vengeance upon the rash intruder. He had passed safely among the horrors of the coral forest; but here, on this plateau, could he hope to be so safe? Might not the slightest movement on his part create a disturbance of water sufficient to awaken the attention of those departed enemies and bring them back?

This was his fear. But hope, and a resolute will, and a determination to risk all on this last hazard, alike impelled him on. Danger now lay every where, above as well as below. An advance was not more perilous than an ascent to the boat. Taking comfort from this last thought he moved onward with a steady, determined step.

Hope grew stronger as he drew nearer. The dark mass gradually formed itself into a more distinct outline. The uncertain lines defined into more certain shape, and the resemblance to a ship became greater and greater. He could no longer resist the conviction that this must be a ship.

Still he tried feebly to prepare for disappointment, and made faint fancies as to the reason why a rock should be formed here in this shape. All the time he scouted those fancies and felt assured that it was not a rock.

Nearer and nearer. Doubt no longer remained. He stood close beside it. It was indeed a ship! Its sides rose high over head. Its lofty stern stood up like a tower, after the fashion of a ship of the days of Queen Elizabeth. The masts had fallen and lay, encumbered with the rigging, over the side.

Brandon walked all around it, his heart beating fast, seeing at every step some new proof that this must be no other, by any conceivable possibility, than the one which he sought. On reaching the bows he saw the outline of a bird carved for the figure-head, and knew that this must be the *Phoenix*.

He walked around. The bottom was sandy and the ship had settled down to some depth. Her sides were covered with fine dark shells, like an incrustation, to a depth of an inch, mingled with a short growth of a green, slimy sea-weed.

At last he could delay no longer. One of the masts lay over the side, and this afforded an easy way by which he could clamber upward upon the deck.

In a few moments Brandon stood upon the deck of the *Phoenix*.

The ship which had thus lain here through centuries, saturated with water that had penetrated to its inmost fibre, still held together sturdily. Beneath the sea the water itself had acted as a preservative, and retarded or prevented decay. Brandon looked around as he stood there, and the light that came from above, where the surface of the sea was now much nearer than before, showed him all the extent of the ship.

The timbers which supported the deck had lost their stiffness and sunk downward, the masts, as before stated, had toppled over for the same reason, yielding to their own weight, which, as

"THE MASTS HAD FALLEN AND LAY, ENCUMBERED WITH THE RIGGING, OVER THE SIDE."

the vessel was slightly on one side, had gradually borne them down; the bowsprit also had fallen. The hatchways had yielded, and, giving way, had sunk down within the hold. The doors which led into the cabin in the lofty poop were lying prostrate on the deck. The large sky-light which once had stood there had also followed the same fate.

Before going down Brandon had arranged a signal to send to Frank in case he found the ship. In his excitement he had not yet given it. Before venturing further he thought of this. But he decided not to make the signal. The idea came, and was rejected amidst a world of varying hopes and fears. He thought that if he was successful he himself would be the best messenger of success; and, if not, he would be the best messenger of evil.

He advanced toward the cabin. Turning away from the door he clambered upon the poop, and, looking down, tried to see what depth there might be beneath. He saw something which looked as though it had once been a table. Slowly and cautiously he let himself down through the opening, and his feet touched bottom. He moved downward, and let his feet slide till they touched the floor.

He was within the cabin.

The light here was almost equal to that without, for the sky-light was very wide. The floor

was sunken in like the deck of the ship. He looked around to see where he might first search for the treasure. Suddenly his eye caught sight of something which drove away every other thought.

At one end was a seat, and there, propped up against the wall, was a skeleton in a sitting posture. Around it was a belt with a sword attached. The figure had partly twisted itself round, but its head and shoulders were so propped up against the wall that it could not fall.

Brandon advanced, filled with a thousand emotions. One hand was lying down in front. He lifted it. There was a gold ring on the bony finger. He took it off. In the dim light he saw, cut in bold relief on this seal-ring, the crest of his family—a Phœnix.

It was his ancestor himself who was before him. Here he had calmly taken his seat when the ship was settling slowly down into the embrace of the waters. Here he had taken his seat, calmly and sternly, awaiting his death—perhaps with a feeling of grim triumph that he could thus elude his foes. This was the man, and this the hand, which had written the message that had drawn the descendant here.

Such were the thoughts that passed through Brandon's mind. He put the ring on his own finger and turned away. His ancestor had summoned him hither, and here he was. Where was the treasure that was promised?

Brandon's impatience now rose to a fever. Only one thought filled his mind. All around the cabin were little rooms, into each of which he looked. The doors had all fallen away. Yet he saw nothing in any of them.

He stood for a moment in deep doubt. Where could he look? Could he venture down into the dark hold and explore? How could he hope to find any thing there, amidst the ruins of that interior where guns and chains lay, perhaps all mingled together where they had fallen? It would need a longer time to find it than he had at first supposed. Yet would he falter? No! Rather than give up he would pass years here, till he had dismembered the whole ship and strewn every particle of her piecemeal over the bottom of the sea. Yet he had hoped to solve the whole mystery at the first visit; and now, since he saw no sign of any thing like treasure, he was for a while at a loss what to do.

His ancestor had summoned him, and he had come. Where was the treasure? Where? Why could not that figure arise and show him?

Such were his thoughts. Yet these thoughts, the result of excitement that was now a frenzy, soon gave rise to others that were calmer.

He reflected that perhaps some other feeling than what he had at first imagined might have inspired that grim old Englishman when he took his seat there and chose to drown on that seat rather than move away. Some other feeling, and what feeling? Some feeling which must have been the strongest in his heart. What was that? The one which had inspired the message, the desire to secure still more that treasure for which he had toiled and fought. His last act was to send the message, why should he not have still borne that thought in his mind and carried it till he died?

The skeleton was at one end, supported by the wall. Two posts projected on each side. A heavy oaken chair stood there, which had once perhaps been fastened to the floor. Brandon thought that he would first examine that wall. Perhaps there might be some opening there.

He took the skeleton in his arms reverently, and proceeded to lift it from the chair. He could not. He looked more narrowly, and saw a chain which had been fastened around it and bound it to the chair.

What was the meaning of this? Had the crew mutinied, bound the captain, and run? Had the Spaniards seized the ship after all? Had they recovered the spoil, and punished in this way the plunderer of three galleons, by binding him here to the chair, scuttling the ship, and sending him down to the bottom of the sea?

The idea of the possibility of this made Brandon sick with anxiety. He pulled the chair away, put it on one side, and began to examine the wooden wall by running his hand along it. There was nothing whatever perceptible. The wall was on the side farthest from the stern, and almost amidships. He pounded it, and, by the feeling, knew that it was hollow behind. He walked to the door which was on one side, and passed in behind this very wall. There was nothing there. It had once perhaps been used as part of the cabin. He came back disconsolately, and stood on the very place where the chair had been.

"Let me be calm," he said to himself. "This enterprise is hopeless. Yes, the Spaniards captured the ship, recovered the treasure, and drowned my ancestor. Let me not be deceived. Let me cast away hope, and search here without any idle expectation."

Suddenly as he thought he felt the floor gradually giving way beneath him. He started, but before he could move or even think in what direction to go the floor sank in, and he at once sank with it downward.

Had it not been that the tube was of ample extent, and had been carefully [illegible] so as to guard against any abrupt descent among rocks at the bottom of the sea, this sudden fall might have ended Brandon's career forever. As it was he only sank quickly, but without accident, until his breast was on a level with the cabin floor.

In a moment the truth flashed upon him. He had been standing on a trap-door which opened from the cabin floor into the hold of the ship. Over this trap-door old Ralph Brandon had seated and bound himself. Was it to guard the treasure? Was it that he might await his descendant, and thus silently indicate to him the place where he must look?

And now the fever of Brandon's conflicting hope and fear grew more intense than it had ever yet been through all this day of days. He stooped down to feel what it was that lay under his feet. His hands grasped something, the very touch of which sent a thrill sharp and sudden through every fibre of his being.

They were metallic bars!

He rose up again overcome. He hardly dared to take one up so as to see what it might be. For the actual sight would realize hope or destroy it forever.

Once more he stooped down. In a sort of fury he grasped a bar in each hand and raised it up to the light.

Down under the sea the action of water had

not destroyed the color of those bars which he held up in the dim light that came through the waters. The dull yellow of those rough ingots seemed to gleam with dazzling brightness before his bewildered eyes, and filled his whole soul with a torrent of rapture and of triumph.

His emotions overcame him. The bars of gold fell down from his trembling hands. He sank back and leaned against the wall.

But what was it that lay under his feet? What were all these bars? Were they all gold? Was this indeed all here—the plunder of the Spanish treasure-ships—the wealth which might purchase a kingdom—the treasure equal to an empire's revenue — the gold and jewels in countless store?

A few moments of respite were needed in order to overcome the tremendous conflict of feeling which raged within his breast. Then once more he stooped down. His outstretched hand felt over all this space which thus was piled up with treasure.

It was about four feet square. The ingots lay in the centre. Around the sides were boxes. One of these he took out. It was made of thick oaken plank, and was about ten inches long and eight wide. The rusty nails gave but little resistance, and the iron bands which once bound them peeled off at a touch. He opened the box.

Inside was a casket.

He tore open the casket.

It was filled with jewels!

His work was ended. No more search, no more fear. He bound the casket tightly to the end of the signal-line, added to it a bar of gold, and clambered to the deck.

He cast off the weight that was at his waist, which he also fastened to the line, and let it go.

Freed from the weight he rose buoyantly to the top of the water.

The boat pulled rapidly toward him and took him in. As he removed his helmet he saw Frank's eyes fixed on his in mute inquiry. His face was ashen, his lips bloodless.

Louis smiled.

"Heavens!" cried Frank, "can it be?"

"Pull up the signal-line and see for yourself," was the answer.

And, as Frank pulled, Louis uttered a cry which made him look up.

Louis pointed to the sun. "Good God! what a time I must have been down!"

"Time!" said Frank. "Don't say time—it was eternity!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEATRICE'S JOURNAL.

BRANDON HALL.

September 1, 1848.—Paolo Lanzhetti used to say that it was useful to keep a diary; not one from day to day, for each day's events are generally trivial, and therefore not worthy of record; but rather a statement in full of more important events in one's life, which may be turned to in later years. I wish I had begun this sixteen months ago, when I first came here. How full would have been my melancholy record by this time!

Where shall I begin?

Of course, with my arrival here, for that is the time when we separated. There is no need for me to put down in writing the events that took place when *he* was with me. Not a word that he ever spoke, not a look that he ever gave, has escaped my memory. This much I may set down here.

Alas! the shadow of the African forest fell deeply and darkly upon me. Am I stronger than other women, or weaker? I know not. Yet I can be calm while my heart is breaking. Yes, I am at once stronger and weaker; so weak that my heart breaks, so strong that I can hide it.

I will begin from the time of my arrival here.

I came knowing well who the man was and what he was whom I had for my father. I came with every word of that despairing voyager ringing in my ears—that cry from the drifting *Vishnu*, where Despard laid down to die. How is it that his very name thrills through me? I am nothing to him. I am one of the hateful brood of murderers. A Thug was my father—and my mother who? And who am I, and what?

At least my soul is not his, though I am his daughter. My soul is myself, and life on earth can not last forever. Hereafter I may stand where that man may never approach.

How can I ever forget the first sight which I had of my father, who before I saw him had become to me as abhorrent as a demon! I came up in the coach to the door of the Hall and looked out. On the broad piazza there were two men; one was sitting, the other standing.

The one who was standing was somewhat elderly, with a broad, fat face, which expressed nothing in particular but vulgar good-nature. He was dressed in black, and looked like a serious butler, or perhaps still more like some of the Dissenting ministers whom I have seen. He stood with his hands in his pockets, looking at me with a vacant smile.

The other man was younger, not over thirty. He was thin, and looked pale from dissipation. His face was covered with spots, his eyes were gray, his eyelashes white. He was smoking a very large pipe, and a tumbler of some kind of drink stood on the stone pavement at his feet. He stared at me between the puffs of his pipe, and neither moved nor spoke.

If I had not already tasted the bitterness of despair I should have tasted it as I saw these men. Something told me that they were my father and brother. My very soul sickened at the sight—the memory of Despard's words came back—and if it had been possible to have felt any tender natural affection for them, this recollection would have destroyed it.

"I wish to see Mr. Potts," said I, coldly.

My father stared at me.

"I'm Mr. Potts," he answered.

"I am Beatrice," said I; "I have just arrived from China."

By this time the driver had opened the door, and I got out and walked up on the piazza.

"Johnnie," exclaimed my father, "what the devil is the meaning of this?"

"Gad, I don't know," returned John, with a puff of smoke.

"Didn't you say she was drowned off the African coast?"

"I saw so in the newspapers."

"Didn't you tell me about the *Falcon* rescuing her from the pirates, and then getting wrecked with all on board?"

"Yes, but then there was a girl that escaped."

"Oh ho!" said my father, with a long whistle. "I didn't know that."

He turned and looked at me hastily, but in deep perplexity.

"So you're the girl, are you?" said he at last.

"I am your daughter," I answered.

I saw him look at John, who winked in return.

He walked up and down for a few minutes, and at last stopped and looked at me again.

"That's all very well," said he at last, "but how do I know that you're the party? Have you any proof of this?"

"No."

"You have nothing but your own statement?"

"No."

"And you may be an impostor. Mind you—I'm a magistrate—and you'd better be careful."

"You can do what you choose," said I, coldly.

"No, I can't. In this country a man can't do what he chooses."

I was silent.

"Johnnie," said my father, "I'll have to leave her to you. You arrange it."

John looked at me lazily, still smoking, and for some time said nothing.

"I suppose," said he at last, "you've got to put it through. You began it, you know. You would send for her. I never saw the use of it."

"But do you think this is the party?"

"Oh, I dare say. It don't make any difference any way. Nobody would take the trouble to come to you with a sham story."

"That's a fact," said my father.

"So I don't see but you've got to take her."

"Well," said my father, "if you think so, why all right."

"I don't think any thing of the kind," returned John, snappishly. "I only think that she's the party you sent for."

"Oh, well, it's all the same," said my father, who then turned to me again.

"If you're the girl," he said, "you can get in. Hunt up Mrs. Compton, and she'll take charge of you."

Compton! At the mention of that name a shudder passed through me. She had been in the family of the murdered man, and had ever since lived with his murderer. I went in without a word, prepared for the worst; and expecting to see some evil-faced woman, fit companion for the pair outside.

A servant was passing along. "Where is Mrs. Compton?" I asked.

"Somewhere or other, I suppose," growled the man, and went on.

I stood quietly. Had I not been prepared for some such thing as this I might perhaps have broken down under grief, but I had read the MS., and nothing could surprise or wound me.

I waited there for nearly half an hour, during which time no notice was taken of me. I heard my father and John walk down the piazza steps and go away. They had evidently forgotten all about me. At last a man came toward the door who did not look like a servant. He was dressed in black. He was a slender, pale, shambling man, with thin, light hair, and a furtive eye and a weary face. He did not look like one who would insult me, so I asked him where I could find Mrs. Compton.

He started as I spoke and looked at me in wonder, yet respectfully.

"I have just come from China," said I, "and my father told me to find Mrs. Compton."

He looked at me for some time without speaking a word. I began to think that he was imbecile.

"So you are Mr. Potts's daughter," said he at last, in a thin, weak voice. "I—I didn't know that you had come—I—I knew that he was expecting you—but heard you were lost at sea— Mrs. Compton—yes—oh yes—I'll show you where you can find Mrs. Compton."

He was embarrassed, yet not unkind. There was wonder in his face, as though he was surprised at my appearance. Perhaps it was because he found me so unlike my father. He walked toward the great stairs, from time to time turning his head to look at me, and ascended them. I followed, and after going to the third story we came to a room.

"That's the place," said he.

He then turned, without replying to my thanks, and left me. I knocked at the door. After some delay it was opened, and I went in. A thin, pale woman was there. Her hair was perfectly white. Her face was marked by the traces of great grief and suffering, yet overspread by an expression of surpassing gentleness and sweetness. She looked like one of these women who live lives of devotion for others, who suffer out of the spirit of self-sacrifice, and count their own comfort and happiness as nothing in comparison with that of those whom they love. My heart warmed toward her at the first glance; I saw that this place could not be altogether corrupt since she was here.

"I am Mr. Potts's daughter," said I; "are you Mrs. Compton?"

She stood mute. An expression of deadly fear overspread her countenance, which seemed to turn her white face to a grayish hue, and the look that she gave me was such a look as one may cast upon some object of mortal fear.

"You look alarmed," said I, in surprise; "and why? Am I then so frightful?"

She seized my hand and covered it with kisses. This new outburst surprised me as much as her former fear. I did not know what to do. "Ah! my sweet child, my dearest!" she murmured. "How did you come here, here of all places on earth?"

I was touched by the tenderness and sympathy of her tone. It was full of the gentlest love. "How did you come here?" I asked.

She started and turned on me her former look of fear.

"Do not look at me so," said I, "dear Mrs. Compton. You are timid. Do not be afraid of me. I am incapable of inspiring fear." I pressed her hand. "Let us say nothing more now about the place. We each seem to know what it is. Since I find one like you living here it will not seem altogether a place of despair."

"Oh, dear child, what words are these? You speak as if you knew all."

"I know much," said I, "and I have suffered much."

"Ah, my dearest! you are too young and too

beautiful to suffer." An agony of sorrow came over her face. Then I saw upon it an expression which I have often marked since, a strange struggling desire to say something, which that excessive and ever-present terror of hers made her incapable of uttering. Some secret thought was in her whole face, but her faltering tongue was paralyzed and could not divulge it.

She turned away with a deep sigh. I looked at her with much interest. She was not the woman I expected to find. Her face and voice won my heart. She was certainly one to be trusted. But still there was this mystery about her.

Nothing could exceed her kindness and tenderness. She arranged my room. She did every thing that could be done to give it an air of comfort. It was a very luxuriously furnished chamber. All the house was lordly in its style and arrangements. That first night I slept the sleep of the weary.

The next day I spent in my room, occupied with my own sad thoughts. At about three in the afternoon I saw *him* come up the avenue. My heart throbbed violently. My eyes were riveted upon that well-known face, how loved! how dear! In vain I tried to conjecture the reason why he should come. Was it to strike the first blow in his just, his implacable vengeance? I longed that I might receive that blow. Any thing that came from *him* would be sweet.

He staid a long time and then left. What passed I can not conjecture. But it had evidently been an agreeable visit to my father, for I heard him laughing uproariously on the piazza about something not long after he had gone.

I have not seen him since.

For several weeks I scarcely moved from my room. I ate with Mrs. Compton. Her reserve was impenetrable. It was with painful fear and trembling that she touched upon any thing connected with the affairs of the house or the family. I saw it and spared her. Poor thing, she has always been too timid for such a life as this.

At the end of a month I began to think that I could live here in a state of obscurity without being molested. Strange that a daughter's feelings toward a father and brother should be those of horror, and that her desire with reference to them should be merely to keep out of their sight. I had no occupation, and needed none, for I had my thoughts and my memories. These memories were bitter, yet sweet. I took the sweet, and tried to solace myself with them. The days are gone forever; no longer does the sea spread wide; no longer can I hear his voice; I can hold him in my arms no more; yet I can remember—

"Das süsseste Glück für die trauernde Brust,
Nach der schonen Liebe verschwundener Lust,
Sind der liebe Schmerzen und Klagen."

I think I had lived this sort of life for three months without seeing either my father or brother.

At the end of that time my father sent for me. He informed me that he intended to give a grand entertainment to the county families, and wanted me to do the honors. He had ordered dressmakers for me; he wished me to wear some jewels which he had in the house, and informed me that it would be the grandest thing of the kind that had ever taken place. Fire-works were going to be let off; the grounds were to be illuminated, and nothing that money could effect would be spared to render it the most splendid festival that could be imagined.

I did as he said. The dress-makers came, and I allowed them to array me as they chose. My father informed me that he would not give me the jewels till the time came, hinting a fear that I might steal them.

At last the evening arrived. Invitations had been sent every where. It was expected that the house would be crowded. My father even ventured to make a personal request that I would adorn myself as well as possible. I did the best I could, and went to the drawing-room to receive the expected crowds.

The hour came and passed, but no one appeared. My father looked a little troubled, but he and John waited in the drawing-room. Servants were sent down to see if any one was approaching. An hour passed. My father looked deeply enraged. Two hours passed. Still no one came. Three hours passed. I waited calmly, but my father and John, who had all the time been drinking freely, became furious. It was now midnight, and all hope had left them. They had been treated with scorn by the whole county.

The servants were laughing at my father's disgrace. The proud array in the different rooms was all a mockery. The elaborate fire-works could not be used.

My father turned his eyes, inflamed by anger and strong drink, toward me.

"She's a d——d bad investment," I heard him say.

"I told you so," said John, who did not deign to look at me; "but you were determined."

They then sat drinking in silence for some time.

"Sold!" said my father, suddenly, with an oath.

John made no reply.

"I thought the county would take to her. She's one of their own sort," my father muttered.

"If it weren't for you they might," said John; "but they ain't overfond of her dear father."

"But I sent out the *invites* in her name."

"No go anyhow."

"I thought I'd get in with them all right away, hobnob with lords and baronets, and maybe get knighted on the spot."

John gave a long scream of laughter.

"You old fool!" he cried; "so that's what you're up to, is it? Sir John—ha, ha, ha! You'll never be made Sir John by parties, I'm afraid."

"Oh, don't you be too sure. I'm not put down. I'll try again," he continued, after a pause. "Next year I'll do it. Why, she'll marry a lord, and then won't I be a lord's father-in-law! What do you say to that?"

"When did you get these notions in your blessed head?" asked John.

"Oh, I've had them— It's not so much for myself, Johnnie—but for you. For if I'm a lord you'll be a lord too."

"Lord Potts. Ha, ha, ha!"

"No," said my father, with some appearance of vexation, "not that; we'll take our title the way all the lords do, from the estates. I'll be Lord Brandon, and when I die you'll get the title."

"And that's your little game. Well, you've

played such good little games in your life that I've got nothing to say, except—'Go it!'"

"She's the one that'll give me a lift."

"Well, she ought to be able to do something."

By this time I concluded that I had done my duty and prepared to retire. I did not wish to overhear any of their conversation. As I walked out of the room I still heard their remarks:

"Blest if she don't look as if she thought herself the Queen," said John.

"It's the diamonds, Johnnie."

"No it ain't, it's the girl herself. I don't like the way she has of looking at me and through me."

"Why, that's the way with that kind. It's what the lords like."

"I don't like it, then, and I tell you *she's got to be took down!*"

This was the last I heard. Yet one thing was evident to me from their conversation. My father had some wild plan of effecting an entrance into society through me. He thought that after he was once recognized he might get sufficient influence to gain a title and found a family. I also might marry a lord. He thus dreamed of being Lord Brandon, and one of the great nobles of the land.

Amidst my sadness I almost smiled at this vain dream; but yet John's words affected me strongly—"You've played such good little games in your life." Well I knew with whom they were played. One was with Despard, the other with Brandon.

This then was the reason why he had sent for me from China. The knowledge of his purpose made my life neither brighter nor darker. I still lived on as before.

During these months Mrs. Compton's tender devotion to me never ceased. I respected her, and forbore to excite that painful fear to which she was subject. Once or twice I forgot myself and began speaking to her about her strange position here. She stopped me with her look of alarm.

"Are you not afraid to be kind to me?" I asked.

She looked at me piteously.

"You are the only one that is kind to me," I continued. "How have you the courage?"

"I can not help it," she murmured, "you are so dear to me."

She sighed and was silent. The mystery about her remained unchanged; her gentle nature, her tender love, and her ever-present fear. What was there in her past that so influenced her life? Had she too been mixed up with the crime on the *Vishnu*? She! impossible. Yet surely something as dark as that must have been required to throw so black a cloud over her life. Yet what—what could that have been? In spite of myself I associate her secret with the tragedy of Despard. She was in his family long. His wife died. She must have been with her at the time.

The possibilities that have suggested themselves to my mind will one day drive me mad. Alas, how my heart yearns over that lonely man in the driving ship! And yet, merciful God! who am I that I should sympathize with him? My name is infamy, my blood is pollution.

I spoke to her once in a general way about the past. Had she ever been out of England? I asked.

"Yes," she answered, dreamily.

"Where?"

She looked at me and said not a word.

At another time I spoke of China, and hinted that perhaps she too knew something about the East. The moment that I said this I repented. The poor creature was shaken from head to foot with a sudden convulsion of fear. This convulsion was so terrible that it seemed to me as though another would be death. I tried to soothe her, but she looked fearfully at me for a long time after.

At another time I asked her directly whether her husband was alive. She looked at me with deep sadness and shook her head. I do not know what position she holds here. She is not housekeeper; none of the servants pay any attention to her whatever. There is an impudent head servant who manages the rest. I noticed that the man who showed me to her room when I first came treats her differently from the rest. Once or twice I saw them talking in one of the halls. There was deep respect in his manner. What he does I have not yet found out. He has always shown great respect to me, though why I can not imagine. He has the same timidity of manner which marks Mrs. Compton. His name is Philips.

I once asked Mrs. Compton who Philips was, and what he did. She answered quickly that he was a kind of clerk to Mr. Potts, and helped him to keep his accounts.

"Has he been with him long?" I continued.

"Yes, a considerable time," she said—but I saw that the subject distressed her, so I changed it.

For more than three months I remained in my room, but at last, through utter despair, I longed to go out. The noble grounds were there, high hills from which the wide sea was visible—that sea which shall be associated with his memory till I die. A great longing came over me to look upon its wide expanse, and feed my soul with old and dear memories. There it would lie, the same sea from which he so often saved me, over which we sailed till he laid down his noble life at my feet, and I gave back that life to him again.

I used to ascend a hill which was half a mile behind the Hall within the grounds, and pass whole days there unmolested. No one took the trouble to notice what I did, at least I thought so till afterward. There for months I used to go. I would sit and look fixedly upon the blue water, and my imagination would carry me far away to the South, to that island on the African shore, where he once reclined in my arms, before the day when I learned that my touch was pollution to him—to that island where I afterward knelt by him as he lay senseless, slowly coming back to life, when if I might but touch the hem of his garment it was bliss enough for one day. Ah me, how often I have wet his feet with my tears—poor, emaciated feet—and longed to be able to wipe them with my hair, but dared not. He lay unconscious. He never knew the anguish of my love.

Then I was less despairing. The air around was filled with the echo of his voice; I could shut my eyes, and bring him before me. His face was always visible to my soul.

One day the idea came into my head to extend my ramble into the country outside, in order to get a wider view. I went to the gate.

The porter came out and asked what I wanted. I told him.

"You can't go out," said he, rudely.

"Why not?"

"Oh, them's Potts's orders—that's enough, I think."

"He never said so to me," I replied, mildly.

"That's no odds; he said so to me, and he told me if you made any row to tell you that you were watched, and might just as well give up at once."

"Watched!" said I, wonderingly.

"Yes—for fear you'd get skittish, and try and do something foolish. Old Potts is bound to keep you under his thumb."

I turned away. I did not care much. I felt more surprise than any thing else to think that he would take the trouble to watch me. Whether he did or not was of little consequence. If I could only be where I had the sea before me it was enough.

That day, on going back to the Hall, I saw John sitting on the piazza. A huge bull-dog which he used to take with him every where was lying at his feet. Just before I reached the steps a Malay servant came out of the house.

He was about the same age as John. I knew him to be a Malay when I first saw him, and concluded that my father had picked him up in the East. He was slight but very lithe and muscular, with dark glittering eyes and glistening white teeth. He never looked at me when I met him, but always at the ground, without seeming to be aware of my existence.

The Malay was passing out when John called out to him,

"Hi, there, Vijal!"

Vijal looked carelessly at him.

"Here!" cried John, in the tone with which he would have addressed his dog.

Vijal stopped carelessly.

"Pick up my hat, and hand it to me."

His hat had fallen down behind him. Vijal stood without moving, and regarded him with an evil smile.

"D—n you, do you hear?" cried John. "Pick up my hat."

But Vijal did not move.

"If you don't, I'll set the dog on you," cried John, starting to his feet in a rage.

Still Vijal remained motionless.

"Nero!" cried John, furiously, pointing to Vijal, "seize him, Sir."

The dog sprang up and at once leaped upon Vijal. Vijal warded off the assault with his arm. The dog seized it, and held on, as was his nature. Vijal did not utter a cry, but seizing the dog, he threw him on his back, and flinging himself upon him, fixed his own teeth in the dog's throat.

John burst into a torrent of the most frightful curses. He ordered Vijal to let go of the dog. Vijal did not move; but while the dog's teeth were fixed in his arm, his own were still fixed as tenaciously in the throat of the dog.

John sprang forward and kicked him with frightful violence. He leaped on him and stamped on him. At last, Vijal drew a knife from his girdle and made a dash at John. This frightened John, who fell back cursing. Vijal then raised his head.

The dog lay motionless. He was dead. Vijal sat down, his arm running blood, with the knife in his hand, still glaring at John.

During this frightful scene I stood rooted to the spot in horror. At last the sight of Vijal's suffering roused me. I rushed forward, and, tearing the scarf from my neck, knelt down and reached out my hand to stanch the blood.

Vijal drew back. "Poor Vijal," said I, "let me stop this blood. I can dress wounds. How you suffer!"

He looked at me in bewilderment. Surprise at hearing a kind word in this house of horror seemed to deprive him of speech. Passively he let me take his arm, and I bound it up as well as I could.

All this time John stood cursing, first me, and then Vijal. I said not a word, and Vijal did not seem to hear him, but sat regarding me with his fiery black eyes. When at last I had finished, he rose and still stood staring at me. I walked into the house.

John hurled a torrent of imprecations after me. The last words that I heard were the same as he had said once before. "You've got to be took down; and I'll be d—d if you don't get took down precious soon!"

I told Mrs. Compton of what had happened. As usual, she was seized with terror. She looked at me with a glance of fearful apprehension. At last she gasped out:

"They'll kill you."

"Let them," said I, carelessly; "it would be better than living."

"Oh dear!" groaned the poor old thing, and sank sobbing in a chair. I did what I could to soothe her, but to little purpose. She afterward told me that Vijal had escaped further punishment in spite of John's threats, and hinted that they were half afraid of him.

The next day, on attempting to go out, Philips told me that I was not to be permitted to leave the house. I considered it the result of John's threat, and yielded without a word.

After this I had to seek distraction from my thoughts within the house. Now there came over me a great longing for music. Once, when in the drawing-room on that famous evening of the abortive fête, which was the only time I ever was there, I had noticed a magnificent grand piano of most costly workmanship. The thought of this came to my mind, and an unconquerable desire to try it arose. So I went down and began to play.

It was a little out of tune, but the tone was marvelously full and sweet. I threw myself with indescribable delight into the charm of the hour. All the old joy which music once used to bring to me came back. Imagination, stimulated by the swelling harmonies, transported me far away from this prison-house and its hateful associations to that happier time of youth when not a thought of sorrow came over me. I lost myself therein. Then that passed, that life vanished, and the sea-voyage began. The thoughts of my mind and the emotions of my heart passed down to the quivering chords and trembled into life and sound.

I do not know how long I had been playing when suddenly I heard a sob behind me. I started and turned. It was Philips.

He was standing with tears in his eyes and a rapt expression on his emaciated face, his hands

"I STOOD LOOKING AT HIM WITH A GAZE SO FIXED AND INTENSE THAT IT SEEMED AS IF ALL MY BEING WERE CENTRED IN MY EYES."

hanging listless, and his whole air that of one who had lost all senses save that of hearing. But as I turned and stopped, the spell that bound him was broken. He sighed and looked at me earnestly.

"Can you sing?"

"Would you like me to do so?"

"Yes," he said, in a faint, imploring voice.

I began a low song—a strain associated with that same childhood of which I had just been thinking—a low, sad strain, sweet to my ears and to my soul; it spoke of peace and innocence, quiet home joys, and calm delights. My own mind brought before me the image of the house where I had lived, with the shadow of great trees around, and gorgeous flowers everywhere, where the sultry air breathed soft, and beneath the hot noon all men sank to rest and slumber.

When I stopped I turned again. Philips had not changed his attitude. But as I turned he uttered an exclamation and tore out his watch.

"Oh, Heavens!—two hours!" he exclaimed. "He'll kill me for this."

With these words he rushed out of the room.

I kept up my music for about ten days, when one day it was stopped forever. I was in the middle of a piece when I heard heavy footsteps behind me. I turned and saw my father. I rose and looked at him with an effort to be respectful. It was lost on him, however. He did not glance at me.

"I came up to say to you," said he, after a little hesitation, "that I can't stand this infernal squall and clatter any longer. So in future you just shut up."

He turned and left me. I closed the piano forever, and went to my room.

The year ended, and a new year began. January passed away. My melancholy began to affect my health. I scarcely ever slept at night, and to eat was difficult. I hoped that I was going to die. Alas! death will not come when one calls.

One day I was in my room lying on the couch when Mrs. Compton came. On entering she looked terrified about something. She spoke in a very agitated voice: "They want you down stairs."

"Who?"

"Mr. Potts and John."

"Well," said I, and I prepared to get ready.

"When do they want me?"

"Now," said Mrs. Compton, who by this time was crying.

"Why are you so agitated?" I asked.

"I am afraid for you."

"Why so? Can any thing be worse?"

"Ah, my dearest! you don't know—you don't know."

I said nothing more, but went down. On entering the room I saw my father and John seated at a table with brandy before them. A third man was there. He was a thick-set man of about the same height of my father, but more muscular, with a strong, square jaw, thick neck, low brow, and stern face. My father did not show any actual ferocity in his face whatever he felt; but this man's face expressed relentless cruelty.

On entering the room I walked up a little distance and stood looking at them.

"There, Clark; what do you think of that?" said my father.

The name, Clark, at once made known to me who this man was—that old associate of my father—his assistant on board the *Vishnu*. Yet the name did not add one whit to the abhorrence which I felt—my father was worse even than he.

The man Clark looked at me scrutinizingly for some time.

"So that's the gal," said he, at last.

"That's the gal," said my father.

Clark waved his hand at me. "Turn round sideways," said he.

I looked at him quietly without moving. He repeated the order, but I took no notice of it.

"D—n her!" said he. "Is she deaf?"

"Not a bit of it," said John; "but she's plucky. She'd just as soon you'd kill her as not. There isn't any way of moving her."

"Turn round!" cried my father, angrily.

I turned as he said. "You see," said he, with a laugh, "she's been piously brought up; she honors her father."

At this Clark burst into a loud laugh.

Some conversation followed about me as I stood there. Clark then ordered me to turn round and face him. I took no notice; but on my father's ordering it, I obeyed as before. This appeared to amuse them all very greatly, just as the tricks of an intelligent poodle might have done. Clark gave me many commands on purpose to see my refusal, and have my father's order which followed obeyed.

"Well," said he, at last, leaning back in his chair, "she is a showy piece of furniture. Your idea isn't a bad one either."

He rose from his chair and came toward me. I stood looking at him with a gaze so fixed and intense that it seemed as if all my being were centred in my eyes.

He came up and reached out to take hold of my arm. I stepped back. He looked up angrily. But, for some reason, the moment that he caught sight of my face, an expression of fear passed over his.

"Heavens!" he groaned; "look at that face!"

I saw my father look at me. The same horror passed over his countenance. An awful thought came to me. As these men turned their faces away from me in fear I felt my strength going. I turned and rushed from the room. I do not remember any thing more.

It was early in February when this occurred. Until the beginning of August I lay senseless. For the first four months I hovered faintly between life and death.

Why did they not let me die? Why did I not die? Alas! had I died I might now have been beyond this sorrow: I have waked to meet it all again.

Mrs. Compton says she found me on the floor of my own room, and that I was in a kind of stupor. I had no fever or delirium. A doctor came, who said it was a congestion of the brain. Thoughts like mine might well destroy the brain forever.

For a month I have been slowly recovering. I can now walk about the room. I know nothing of what is going on in the house, and wish to know nothing. Mrs. Compton is as devoted as ever.

I have got thus far, and will stop here. I have been several days writing this. I must stop till I am stronger.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BYZANTINE HYMNISTS.

More than a year had passed since that visit to Thornton Grange which has already been mentioned. Despard had not forgotten or neglected the melancholy case of the Brandon family. He had written in all directions, and had gone on frequent visits.

On his return from one of these he went to the Grange. Mrs. Thornton was sitting in the drawing-room, looking pensively out of the window, when she saw his well-known figure advancing up the avenue. His face was sad, and pervaded by a melancholy expression, which was noticeable now as he walked along.

But when he came into the room that melancholy face suddenly lighted up with the most radiant joy. Mrs. Thornton advanced to meet him, and he took her hand in both of his.

"I ought to say, welcome back again," said she, with forced liveliness, "but you may have been in Holby a week for all I know. When did you come back? Confess now that you have been secluding yourself in your study instead of paying your respects in the proper quarter."

Despard smiled. "I arrived home at eleven this morning. It is now three P.M. by my watch. Shall I say how impatiently I have waited till three o'clock should come?"

"Oh no! don't say any thing of the sort. I

can imagine all that you would say. But tell me where you have been on this last visit?"

"Wandering like an evil spirit, seeking rest and finding none."

"Have you been to London again?"

"Where have I not been?"

By this time they had seated themselves.

"My last journey," said Despard, "like my former ones, was, of course, about the Brandon affair. You know that I have had long conversations with Mr. Thornton about it, and he insists that nothing whatever can be done. But you know, also, that I could not sit down idly and calmly under this conviction. I have felt most keenly the presence of intolerable wrong. Every day I have felt as if I had shared in the infamy of those who neglected that dying man. That was the reason why I wrote to Australia to see if the Brandon who was drowned was really the one I supposed. I heard, you know, that he was the same man, and there is no doubt about that. Then you know, as I told you, that I went around among different lawyers to see if any thing could be done. Nearly all asserted that no redress was possible. That is what Mr. Thornton said. There was one who said that if I were rich enough I might begin a prosecution, but as I am not rich that did me no good. That man would have been glad, no doubt, to have undertaken such a task."

"What is there in law that so hardens the heart?" said Mrs. Thornton, after a pause. "Why should it kill all sentiment, and destroy so utterly all the more spiritual qualities?"

"I don't think that the law does this necessarily. It depends after all on the man himself. If I were a lawyer, I should still love music above all things."

"But did you ever know a lawyer who loved music?"

"I have not known enough of them to answer that. But in England music is not loved so devotedly as in other countries. Is it inconceivable that an Italian lawyer should love music?"

"I don't know. Law is abhorrent to me. It seems to be a profession that kills the finer sentiments."

"Why so, more than medicine? The fact is, where ordinary men are concerned any scientific profession renders Art distasteful. At least this is so in England. After all, most depends on the man himself, and one who is born with a keen sensibility to the charms of art will carry it through life, whatever his profession may be."

"But suppose the man himself has neither taste, nor sensibility, nor any appreciation of the beautiful, nor any sympathy whatever with those who love such things, what then?"

Mrs. Thornton spoke earnestly as she asked this.

"Well," said Despard, "that question answers itself. As a man is born, so he is; and if nature denies him taste or sensibility it makes no difference what is his profession."

Mrs. Thornton made no reply.

"My last journey," said Despard, "was about the Brandon case. I went to London first to see if something could not be done. I had been there before on the same errand, but without success. I was equally unsuccessful this time.

"I tried to find out about Potts, the man who had purchased the estate, but learned that it was necessary to go to the village of Brandon. I went there, and made inquiries. Without exception the people sympathized with the unfortunate family, and looked with detestation upon the man who had supplanted them.

"I heard that a young lady went there last year who was reputed to be his daughter. Every one said that she was extraordinarily beautiful, and looked like a lady. She stopped at the inn under the care of a gentleman who accompanied her, and went to the Hall. She has never come out of it since.

"The landlord told me that the gentleman was a pale, sad-looking man, with dark hair and beard. He seemed very devoted to the young lady, and parted with her in melancholy silence. His account of this young lady moved me very strangely. He was not at all a sentimental man, but a burly John Bull, which made his story all the more touching. It is strange, I must say, that one like her should go into that place and never be seen again. I do not know what to think of it, nor did any of those with whom I spoke in the village."

"Do you suppose that she really went there and never came back?"

"That is what they say."

"Then they must believe that she is kept there."

"Yes, so they do."

"Why do they not take some steps in the matter?"

"What can they do? She is his daughter. Some of the villagers who have been to the Hall at different times say that they heard her playing and singing."

"That does not sound like imprisonment."

"The caged bird sings."

"Then you think she is a prisoner?"

"I think it odd that she has never come out, not even to go to church."

"It is odd."

"This man Potts excited sufficient interest in my mind to lead me to make many inquiries. I found, throughout the county, that every body utterly despised him. They all thought that poor Ralph Brandon had been almost mad, and by his madness had ruined his family. Every body believed that Potts had somehow deceived him, but no one could tell how. They could not bring any direct proof against him.

"But I found out in Brandon the sad particulars of the final fate of the poor wife and her unfortunate children. They had been sent away or assisted away by this Potts to America, and had all died either on the way out or shortly after they had arrived, according to the villagers. I did not tell them what I knew, but left them to believe what they chose. It seemed to me that they must have received this information from Potts himself, who alone in that poor community would have been able to trace the fortunes of the unhappy emigrants."

There was a long silence.

"I have done all that I could," said Despard, in a disconsolate tone, "and I suppose nothing now remains to be done. When we hear again from Pablo there may be some new information upon which we can act."

"And you can go back to your Byzantine poets."

"Yes, if you will assist me."

"You know I shall only be too happy."

"And I shall be eternally grateful. You see, as I told you before, there is a field of labor here for the lover of music which is like a new world. I will give you the grandest musical compositions that you have ever seen. I will let you have the old hymns of the saints who lived when Constantinople was the only civilized spot in Europe, and the Christians there were hurling back the Mohammedans. You shall sing the noblest songs that you have ever seen."

"How—in Greek? You must teach me the alphabet then."

"No; I will translate them for you. The Greek hymns are all in rhythmical prose, like the *Te Deum* and the *Gloria*. A literal translation can be sung as well as the originals. You will then enter into the mind and spirit of the ancient Eastern Church before the days of the schism."

"Yes," continued Despard, with an enthusiasm which he did not care to conceal, "we will go together at this sweet task, and we will sing the *καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν*, which holds the same place in the Greek Church that the *Te Deum* does in ours. We will chant together the Golden Canon of St. John Damascene—the Queen of Canons, the grandest song of 'Christ is risen' that mortals ever composed. Your heart and mine will beat together with one feeling at the sublime choral strain. We will sing the 'Hymn of Victory.' We will go together over the songs of St. Cosmas, St. Theophanes, and St. Theodore; St. Gregory, St. Anatobus, and St. Andrew of Crete shall inspire us; and the thoughts that have kindled the hearts of martyrs at the stake shall exalt our souls to heaven. But I have more than this. I have some compositions of my own; poor ones, indeed, yet an effort in the right way. They are a collection of those hymns of the Primitive Church which are contained in the New Testament. I have tried to set them to music. They are: 'Worthy is the Lamb,' 'Unto Him that loved us,' 'Great and marvelous are thy works,' and the 'Trisagion.' Yes, we will go together at this lofty and heavenly work, and I shall be able to gain a new interpretation from your sympathy."

Despard spoke with a vehement enthusiasm that kindled his eyes with unusual lustre and spread a glow over his pale face. He looked like some devotee under a sudden inspiration. Mrs. Thornton caught all his enthusiasm; her eyes brightened, and her face also flushed with excitement.

"Whenever you are ready to lead me into that new world of music," said she, "I am ready to follow."

"Are you willing to begin next Monday?"

"Yes. All my time is my own."

"Then I will come for you."

"Then I will be waiting for you. By-the-way, are you engaged for to-night?"

"No; why?"

"There is going to be a fête champêtre. It is a ridiculous thing for the Holby people to do; but I have to go to play the patroness. Mr. Thornton does not want to go. Would you sacrifice yourself to my necessities, and allow me your escort?"

"Would a thirsty man be willing to accept a cooling draught?" said Despard, eagerly. "You open heaven before me, and ask me if I will enter."

His voice trembled, and he paused.

"You never forget yourself," said Mrs. Thornton, with slight agitation, looking away as she spoke.

"I will be back at any hour you say."

"You will do no such thing. Since you are here you must remain and dine, and then go with me. Do you suppose I would trust you? Why, if I let you go, you might keep me waiting a whole hour."

"Well, if your will is not law to me what is? Speak, and your servant obeys. To stay will only add to my happiness."

"Then let me make you happy by forcing you to stay."

Despard's face showed his feelings, and to judge by its expression his language had not been extravagant.

The afternoon passed quietly. Dinner was served up. Thornton came in, and greeted Despard with his usual abstraction, leaving his wife to do the agreeable. After dinner, as usual, he prepared for a nap, and Despard and Mrs. Thornton started for the fête.

It was to be in some gardens at the other end of Holby, along the shore. The townspeople had recently formed a park there, and this was one of the preliminaries to its formal inauguration. The trees were hung with innumerable lamps of varied colors. There were bands of music, and triumphal arches, and gay festoons, and wreaths of flowers, and every thing that is usual at such a time.

On arriving, Despard assisted Mrs. Thornton from the carriage and offered his arm. She took it, but her hand rested so lightly on it that its touch was scarce perceptible. They walked around through the illuminated paths. Great crowds of people were there. All looked with respectful pleasure at Mrs. Thornton and the Rector.

"You ought to be glad that you have come," said she. "See how these poor people feel it: We are not persons of very great consequence, yet our presence is marked and enjoyed."

"All places are alike to me," answered Despard, "when I am with you. Still, there are circumstances about this which will make it forever memorable to me."

"Look at those lights," exclaimed Mrs. Thornton, suddenly; "what varied colors!"

"Let us walk into that grotto," said Despard, turning toward a cool, dark place which lay before them.

Here, at the end of the grotto, was a tree, at the foot of which was a seat. They sat down and staid for hours. In the distance the lights twinkled and music arose. They said little, but listened to the confused murmur which in the pauses of the music came up from afar.

Then they rose and walked back. Entering the principal path a great crowd streamed on which they had to face.

Despard sighed. "You and I," said he, stooping low and speaking in a sad voice, "are compelled to go against the tide."

"Shall we turn back and go with it?"

"We can not."

"Do you wish to turn aside?"

"We can not. We must walk against the tide, and against the rush of men. If we turn aside there is nothing but darkness."

They walked on in silence till they reached the gate.

"The carriage has not come," said Mrs. Thornton.

"Do you prefer riding?"

"No."

"It is not far. Will you walk?"

"With pleasure."

They walked on slowly. About half-way they met the carriage. Mrs. Thornton ordered it back, saying that she would walk the rest of the way.

They walked on slowly, saying so little that at last Mrs. Thornton began to speak about the music which they had proposed to undertake. Despard's enthusiasm seemed to have left him. His replies were vague and general. On reaching the gate he stood still for a moment under the trees and half turned toward her. "You don't say any thing about the music?" said she.

"That's because I am so stupid. I have lost my head. I am not capable of a single coherent idea."

"You are thinking of something else all the time."

"My brain is in a whirl. Yes, I am thinking of something else."

"Of what?"

"I'm afraid to say."

Mrs. Thornton was silent. They entered the gate and walked up the avenue, slowly and in silence. Despard made one or two efforts to stop, and then continued. At last they reached the door. The lights were streaming brightly from the window. Despard stood, silently.

"Will you not come in?"

"No, thank you," said he, dreamily. "It is rather too late, and I must go. Good-night."

He held out his hand. She offered hers, and he took it. He held it long, and half stooped as though he wished to say something. She felt the throbbing of his heart in his hand as it clasped hers. She said nothing. Nor did Despard seem able to say any thing. At last he let go her hand slowly and reluctantly.

"You will not forget the music?" said he.

"No."

"Good-night."

He took her hand again in both of his. As the light shone through the windows she saw his face—a face full of longing beyond words, and sadness unutterable.

"Good-night," she faltered.

He let go her hand, and turning away, was lost amidst the gloom. She waited till the sound of his footsteps had died away, and then went into the house.

On the following morning Despard was walking along when he met her suddenly at a corner of the street. He stopped with a radiant face, and, shaking hands with her, for a moment was unable to speak.

"This is too much happiness," he said at last. "It is like a ray of light to a poor captive when you burst upon me so suddenly. Where are you going?"

"Oh, I'm only going to do a little shopping."

"I'm sure I wish that I could accompany you to protect you."

"Well, why not?"

"On the whole, I think that shopping is not my forte, and that my presence would not be essential."

He turned, however, and walked with her some distance, as far as the farthest shop in the town. They talked gayly and pleasantly about the fête. "You will not forget the music," said he, on parting. "Will you come next Monday? If you don't, I won't be responsible for the consequences."

"Do you mean to say, Sir, that you expect me to come alone?"

"I did not hope for any thing else."

"Why, of course, you must call for me. If you do not I won't go."

Despard's eyes brightened.

"Oh, then, since you allow me so sweet a privilege, I will go and accompany you."

"If you fail me I will stay at home," said she, laughingly.

He did not fail her, but at the appointed time went up to the Grange. Some strangers were there, and Mrs. Thornton gave him a look of deep disappointment. The strangers were evidently going to spend the day, so Despard, after a short call, withdrew. Before he left, Mrs. Thornton absented herself on some pretext for a few moments, and as he quitted the room she went to the door with him and gave him a note.

He walked straight home, holding the note in his hands till he reached his study; then he locked himself in, opened the note, and read as follows:

"DEAR MR. DESPARD,—How does it happen that things turn out just as they ought not? I was *so* anxious to go with you to the church to-day about our music. I know my own powers; they are not contemptible; they are not uncultivated; they are simply, and wholly, and irretrievably, *commonplace*. That much I deem it my duty to inform you.

"These wretched people, who have spoiled a day's pleasure, dropped upon me as suddenly as though they had come from the skies. They leave on Thursday morning. Come on Thursday afternoon. If you do not I will never forgive you. On that day give up your manuscripts and books for music and the organ, and allot some portion of your time to, Yours,

"T. T."

On Thursday Despard called, and Mrs. Thornton was able to accompany him. The church was an old one, and had one of the best organs in Wales. Despard was to play and she to sing. He had his music ready, and the sheets were carefully and legibly written out from the precious old Greek scores which he loved so dearly and prized so highly.

They began with the canon for Easter-day of St. John Damascene, who, according to Despard, was the best of the Eastern hymnists. Mrs. Thornton's voice was rich and full. As she came to the *ἀναστάσεως ἡμέρα*—Resurrection Day—it took up a tone of indescribable exultation, blending with the triumph peal of the organ. Despard added his own voice—a deep, strong, full-toned basso—and their blended strains bore aloft the sublimest of utterances, "Christ is arisen!"

Then followed a more mournful chant, full of sadness and profound melancholy, the *τελευταῖον*

"AND THEIR BLENDED STRAINS BORE ALOFT THE SUBLIMEST OF UTTERANCES, 'CHRIST IS ARISEN!'"

ἀσπασμον—the Last Kiss—the hymn of the dead, by the same poet.

Then followed a sublimer strain, the hymn of St. Theodore on the Judgment—*τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν φοικτήν*— where all the horrors of the day of doom are set forth. The chant was commensurate with the dread splendors of the theme. The voices of the two singers blended in perfect concord. The sounds which were thus wrought out bore themselves through the vaulted aisles, returning again to their own ears, imparting to their own hearts something of the awe with which imagination has enshrouded the Day of days, and giving to their voices that saddened cadence which the sad spirit can convey to its material utterance.

Despard then produced some compositions of his own, made after the manner of the Eastern chants, which he insisted were the primitive songs of the early Church. The words were those fragments of hymns which are imbedded in the text of the New Testament. He chose first the song of the angels, which was first sung by "a great voice out of heaven"—*ἰδοὺ, ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ Θεοῦ*—Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men!

The chant was a marvelous one. It spoke of sorrow past, of grief stayed, of misery at an end forever, of tears dried, and a time when "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying." There was a gentle murmur in the flow of that solemn, soothing strain which was lik

the sighing of the evening wind among the hoary forest trees; it soothed and comforted; it brought hope, and holy calm, and sweet peace.

As Despard rose from the organ Mrs. Thornton looked at him with moistened eyes.

"I do not know whether your song brings calm or unrest," said she, sadly, "but after singing it I would wish to die."

"It is not the music, it is the words," answered Despard, "which bring before us a time when there shall be no sorrow or sighing."

"May such a time ever be?" murmured she.

"That," he replied, "it is ours to aim after. There is such a world. In that world all wrongs will be righted, friends will be reunited, and those severed here through all this earthly life will be joined for evermore."

Their eyes met. Their spirit lived and glowed in that gaze. It was sad beyond expression, but each one held commune with the other in a mute intercourse, more eloquent than words.

Despard's whole frame trembled. "Will you sing the *Ave Maria?*" he asked, in a low, scarce audible voice. Her head dropped. She gave a convulsive sigh. He continued: "We used to sing it in the old days, the sweet, never-forgotten days now past forever. We sang it here. We stood hand in hand."

His voice faltered.

"Sing," he said, after a time.

"I can not."

Despard sighed. "Perhaps it is better not; for I feel as though, if you were to sing it, my heart would break."

"Do you believe that hearts can break?" she asked gently, but with indescribable pathos.

Despard looked at her mournfully, and said not a word.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CLASPED HANDS.

THEIR singing went on.

They used to meet once a week and sing in the church at the organ. Despard always went up to the Grange and accompanied her to the church. Yet he scarcely ever went at any other time. A stronger connection and a deeper familiarity arose between them, which yet was accompanied by a profound reverence on Despard's part, that never diminished, but as the familiarity increased only grew more tender and more devoted.

There were many things about their music which he had to say to her. It constituted a common bond between them on which they could talk, and to which they could always revert. It formed a medium for the communion of soul—a lofty, spiritual intercourse, where they seemed to blend, even as their voices blended, in a purer realm, free from the trouble of earth.

Amidst it all Despard had so much to tell her about the nature of the Eastern music that he wrote out a long letter, which he gave her as they parted after an unusually lengthy practice. Part of it was on the subject of music, and the rest of a different character.

The next time that they met she gave him a note in response.

"DEAR MR. DESPARD—Why am I not a seraph, endowed with musical powers beyond mortal reach? You tell me many things, and never seem to imagine that they are all beyond me. You never seem to think that I am hopelessly commonplace. You are kind in doing what you do, but where is the good where one is so stupid as I am?

"I suppose you have given up visiting the Grange forever. I don't call your coming to take me to the church *visits*. I suppose I may as well give you up. It is as difficult to get you here as if you were the Grand Lama of Thibet.

"Amidst all my stupidities I have two or three ideas which may be useful in our music, if I can only put them in practice. Bear with me, and deal gently with

"Yours, despondingly, T. T."

To this Despard replied in a note which he gave her at their next meeting, calling her "Dear Seraph," and signing himself "Grand Lama." After this they always called each other by these names. Grand Lama was an odd name, but it became the sweetest of sounds to Despard since it was uttered by her lips—the sweetest, the most musical, and the tenderest. As to himself he knew not what to call this dear companion of his youth, but the name Seraph came into use, and grew to be associated with her, until at last he never called her any thing else.

Yet after this he used to go to the Grange more frequently. He could not stay away. His steps wandered there irresistibly. An uncontrollable impulse forced him there. She was always alone, awaiting him, generally with a sweet confusion of face and a tenderness of greeting which made him feel ready to fall on his knees before her. How else could he feel? Was she not always in his thoughts? Were not all his sleeping hours one long dream of her? Were not all his waking thoughts filled with her radiant presence?

"How is it under our control
To love or not to love?"

Did he know what it was that he felt for her? He never thought. Enough that he felt. And that feeling was one long agony of intense longing and yearning after her. Had not all his life been filled by that one bright image?

Youth gave it to him. After-years could not efface it. The impress of her face was upon his heart. Her voice was always in his ears. Every word that she had ever spoken to him was treasured up in his memory and heart with an avarice of love which prevented any one word from even being forgotten.

At church and at home, during service and out of it, in the street or in the study, he saw only one face, and heard only one voice. Amidst the [illegible] of committee meetings he was conscious of her image—a sweet face smiling on him, a tender voice saying "Lama." Was there ever so musical and so dear a word as "Lama?" For him never.

The hunger of his longing grew stronger every day. That strong, proud, self-secluded nature of his was more intense in all its feelings, and dwelt with concentrated passion upon this one object of its adoration. He had never had any other object but this one.

A happy boyhood passed in the society of this

sweet playmate, then a young girl of his own age; a happy boyhood here in Holby, where they had always been inseparable, wandering hand in hand along the shore or over the hills; a happy boyhood where she was the one and only companion whom he knew or cared for—this was the sole legacy of his early life. Leaving Holby he had left her, but had never forgotten her. He had carried with him the tender memory of this bright being, and cherished his undying fondness, not knowing what that fondness meant. He had returned to find her married, and severed from him forever, at least in this life. When he found that he had lost her he began to understand how dear she was. All life stood before him aimless, pointless, and meaningless without her. He came back, but the old intercourse could not be renewed; she could not be his, and he could only live, and love, and endure. Perhaps it would have been wiser if he had at once left Holby and sought out some other abode. But the discovery of his love was gradual; it came through suffering and anguish; and when he knew that his love was so intense it was then impossible to leave. To be near her, to breathe the same air, to see her face occasionally, to nurse his old memories, to hoard up remembrances of her words and looks—[illegible] became the chief occupation of his solitude, and the only happiness left in his life.

[illegible]day he went up with a stronger sense of desolation in his heart than usual, going up to see her in order to get consolation from the sight of her face and the sound of her voice. Their former levity had given place to a seriousness of manner which was very different. A deep, intense joy shone in the eyes of each at meeting, but that quick repartee and light badinage which they had used of old had been dropped.

Music was the one thing of which they could speak without fear. Despard could talk of his Byzantine poets, and the chants of the Eastern Church, without being in danger of reawakening painful memories. The piano stood close by, and always afforded a convenient mode of distracting attention when it became too absorbed in one another.

For Mrs. Thornton did not repel him; she did not resent his longing; she did not seem forgetful of what he so well remembered. How was it with her who had given her hand to another?

> "What she felt the while
> Dare he think?"

Yet there were times when he thought it possible that she might feel as he did. The thought brought joy, but it also brought fear. For, if the struggle against this feeling needed all the strength of his nature, what must it cost her? If she had such a struggle as he, how could she endure it? Then, as he considered this, he thought to himself that he would rather she would not love him than love him at such a cost. He was willing to sacrifice his own heart. He wished only to adore her, and was content that she should receive, and permit, and accept his adoration, herself unmoved—a passionless divinity.

In their intercourse it was strange how frequently there were long pauses of perfect silence, during which neither spoke a word. Sometimes each sat looking at the floor; sometimes they looked at one another, as though they could read each other's thoughts, and by the mere gaze of their earnest eyes could hold ample spiritual communion.

On one such occasion they stood by the window looking out upon the lawn, but seeing nothing in that abstracted gaze. Despard stood facing her, close to her. Her hand was hanging by her side. He stooped and took that little slender hand in his. As he did so he trembled from head to foot. As he did so a faint flush passed over her face. Her head fell forward. Despard held her hand and she did not withdraw it. Despard drew her slightly toward him. She looked up into his face with large, eloquent eyes, sad beyond all description, yet speaking things which thrilled his soul. He looked down upon her with eyes that told her all that was in his heart. She turned her head away.

Despard clung to her hand as though that hand were his life, his hope, his joy—as though that alone could save him from some abyss of despair into which he was falling. His lips moved. In vain. No audible sound broke that intense stillness in which the beating and throbbing of those two forlorn hearts could be heard. His lips moved, but all sound died away upon them.

At last a stronger effort broke the silence.

"Teresa!"

It was a strange tone, a tone of longing unutterable, a tone like that which a dying man might use in calling before him one most dear. And all the pent-up feeling of years rushed forth in concentrated energy, and was borne to her ears in the sound of that one word. She looked up with the same glance as before.

"Little playmate," said he, in a tone of infinite sweetness, "have you ever forgotten the old days? Do you remember when you and I last stood hand in hand?"

His voice sounded like the utterance of tears, as though, if he could have wept, he would then have wept as no man wept before; but his eyes were dry through his manhood, and all that tears can express were shown forth in his tone.

As he began to speak her head fell again. As he ended she looked up as before. Her lips moved. She whispered but one word:

"Courtenay!"

She burst into a flood of tears and sank into a chair. And Despard stood, not daring even to soothe her, for fear lest in that vehement convulsion of his soul all his self-command should give way utterly.

At length Mrs. Thornton rose. "Lama," said she, at last, in a low, sad voice, "let us go to the piano."

"Will you sing the *Ave Maria?*" he asked, mournfully.

"I dare not," said she, hastily. "No, any thing but that. I will sing Rossini's *Cujus Animam.*"

Then followed those words which tell in lofty strains of a broken heart:

> Cujus animam gementem
> Contristatam et flebentem
> Pertransivit gladius!

CHAPTER XXVII.

JOURNAL OF PAOLO LANGHETTI.

When Mrs. Thornton saw Despard next she showed him a short note which she had just received from her brother, accompanying his journal. Nearly two years had elapsed since she had last heard from him.

His journal was written as before at long intervals, and was as follows:

Halifax, April 10, 1847.—I exist here, but nothing more. Nothing is offered by this small colonial town that can afford interest. Life goes on monotonously. The officers and their families are what they are every where. They are amiable and pleasant, and try to get the best out of life. The townspeople are hospitable, and there is much refinement among them.

But I live for the most part in a cottage outside of the town, where I can be secluded and free from observation. Near my house is the Northwest Arm. I cross it in a boat, and am at once in a savage wilderness. From the summit of a hill, appropriately named Mount Misery, I can look down upon this city which is bordered by such a wilderness.

The winter has passed since my last entry, and nothing has occurred. I have learned to skate. I went out on a moose-hunt with Colonel Despard. The gigantic horns of a moose which I killed are now over the door of my studio. I have joined in some festivities, and have done the honors of my house. It is an old-fashioned wooden structure which they call the Priory.

So the winter has passed, and April is now here. In this country there is no spring. Snow is yet on the ground. Winter is transformed gradually till summer. I must keep up my fires till June, they say.

During the winter I have guarded my treasure well. I took a house on purpose to have a home for her. But her melancholy continued, and the state of mind in which I found her still endures. Will it ever change? I gave out here that she was a relative who was in ill health. But the winter has passed, and she remains precisely the same. Can she live on long in this mood?

At length I have decided to try a change for her. The Holy Sisterhood of Mercy have a convent here, where she may find a higher and purer atmosphere than any where else. There I have placed her. I have told nothing of her story. They think she is in grief for the death of friends. They have received her with that warm sympathy and holy love which it is the aim of their life to cherish.

> O mater alma Christi carissima,
> Te nunc flagitant devota corda et ora,
> Ora pro nobis!

August 5, 1847.—The summer goes on pleasantly. A bracing climate, a cool sea-breeze, fishing and hunting in the forests, sailing in the harbor—these are the amusements which one can find if he has the leisure.

She has been among the Sisterhood of Mercy for some months. The deep calm of that holy retreat has soothed her, but only this much that her melancholy has not lessened but grown more placid. She is in the midst of those whose thoughts are habitually directed to that world which she longs after. The home from which she has been exiled is the desire of their hearts. They aim after that place for which she longs with so deep a longing. There is sympathy in all those hearts with one another. She hears in their chants and prayers those hopes and desires, and these are but the utterances of what she feels.

Here they sing the matchless Rhythm of Bernard de Morlaix, and in these words she finds the highest expression that human words can give of [illegible] thoughts and desires of her soul. They tell me that the first time they sang it, as they came to this passage she burst into tears and sank down almost senseless:

> O bona patria! lumina sobria te speculantur,
> Ad tua nomina sobria lumina collacrimantur:
> Est tua mentio pectoris unctis, cura doloris,
> Concipientibus aethera mentibus ignis amoris.

November 17.—The winter must soon be here again.

My treasure is well guarded by the Holy Sisterhood. They revere her and look upon her as a saint. They tell me wonderful things about her which have sunk into my soul. They think that she is another Saint Cecilia, or rather Saint Teresa, the Saint of Love and Longing.

She told them once that she was not a Catholic, but that any form of worship was sweet and precious to her—most of all, the lofty utterances of the prayers and hymns of the Church. She will not listen to dogmas, but says that God wishes only love and praise. Yet she joins in all their rites, and in this House, where Love is chiefly adored, she surpasses all in the deep love of her heart.

January 2, 1848.—I have seen her for the first time in many months. She smiled. I never saw her smile before, except once in the ship, when I told my name and made her mother take my place in the cabin.

She smiled. It was as if an angel from heaven had smiled on me. Do I not believe that she is one?

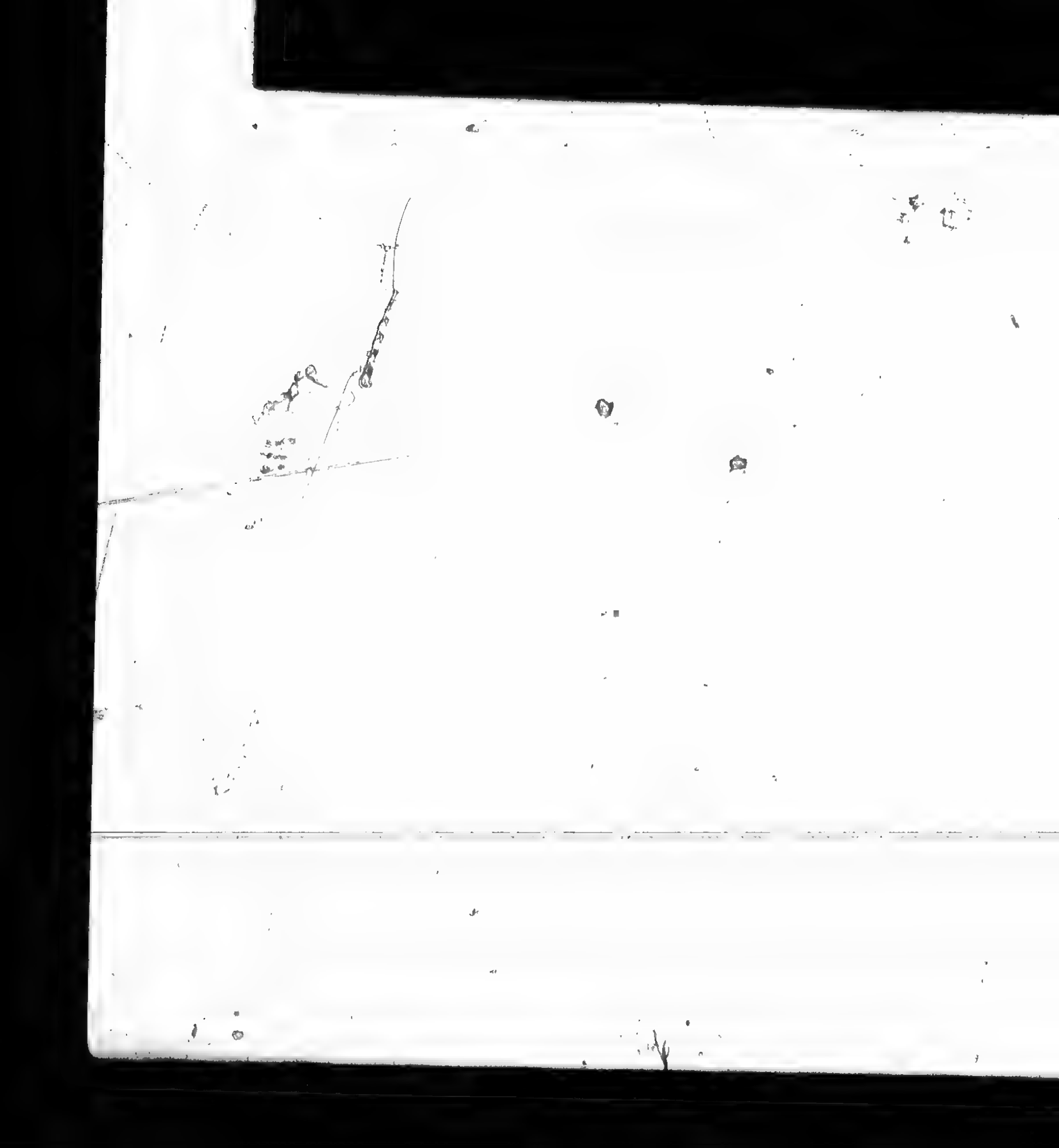
They all say that she is unchanged. Her sadness has had no abatement. On that meeting she made an effort for my sake to stoop to me. Perhaps she saw how my very soul entreated her to speak. So she spoke of the Sisterhood, and said she loved them all. I asked her if she was happier here than at my house. She said "No." I did not know whether to feel rejoiced or sorrowful. Then she told me something which has filled me with wonder ever since.

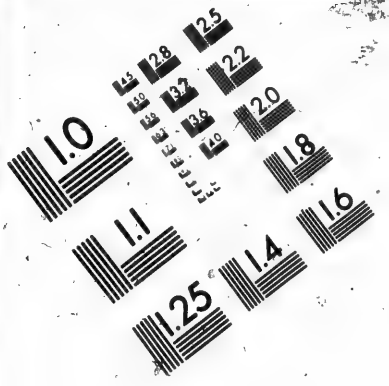
She asked me if I had been making inquiries about her family, for I had said that I would. I told her that I had. She asked what I had heard. I hesitated for a moment, and at last, seeing that she was superior to any sorrow of bereavement, I told her all about the sad fate of her brother Louis, which your old friend Courtenay Despard had communicated to his uncle here. She listened without emotion, and at last, looking earnestly at me, said,

"*He is not dead!*"

I stood amazed. I had seen the very newspapers which contained an account of his death. I had read the letters of Courtenay Despard, which showed how painstaking his search had been. Had he not traveled to every place where he could hear any thing of the Brandons? Had he not written at the very outset wherever he could hope to hear any thing? I did not know what to say.

For Louis Brandon is known to have fallen




1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
1.8
2.0
2.2
2.5
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
4.5
5.0
5.6
6.3
7.1
8.0
9.0
10
11
12
13
14
16
18
20
22
25
28
32
36
40
45
50
56
63
71
80
90
100
110
125
140
160
180
200
220
250
280
320
360
400
450
500
560
630
710
800
900
1000
1100
1250
1400
1600
1800
2000
2200
2500
2800
3200
3600
4000
4500
5000
5600
6300
7100
8000
9000
10000
11000
12500
14000
16000
18000
20000
22000
25000
28000
32000
36000
40000
45000
50000
56000
63000
71000
80000
90000
100000
110000
125000
140000
160000
180000
200000
220000
250000
280000
320000
360000
400000
450000
500000
560000
630000
710000
800000
900000
1000000
1100000
1250000
1400000
1600000
1800000
2000000
2200000
2500000
2800000
3200000
3600000
4000000
4500000
5000000
5600000
6300000
7100000
8000000
9000000
10000000
11000000
12500000
14000000
16000000
18000000
20000000
22000000
25000000
28000000
32000000
36000000
40000000
45000000
50000000
56000000
63000000
71000000
80000000
90000000
100000000
110000000
125000000
140000000
160000000
180000000
200000000
220000000
250000000
280000000
320000000
360000000
400000000
450000000
500000000
560000000
630000000
710000000
800000000
900000000
1000000000
1100000000
1250000000
1400000000
1600000000
1800000000
2000000000
2200000000
2500000000
2800000000
3200000000
3600000000
4000000000
4500000000
5000000000
5600000000
6300000000
7100000000
8000000000
9000000000
10000000000
11000000000
12500000000
14000000000
16000000000
18000000000
20000000000
22000000000
25000000000
28000000000
32000000000
36000000000
40000000000
45000000000
50000000000
56000000000
63000000000
71000000000
80000000000
90000000000
100000000000
110000000000
125000000000
140000000000
160000000000
180000000000
200000000000
220000000000
250000000000
280000000000
320000000000
360000000000
400000000000
450000000000
500000000000
560000000000
630000000000
710000000000
800000000000
900000000000
1000000000000
1100000000000
1250000000000
1400000000000
1600000000000
1800000000000
2000000000000
2200000000000
2500000000000
2800000000000
3200000000000
3600000000000
4000000000000
4500000000000
5000000000000
5600000000000
6300000000000
7100000000000
8000000000000
9000000000000
10000000000000
11000000000000
12500000000000
14000000000000
16000000000000
18000000000000
20000000000000
22000000000000
25000000000000
28000000000000
32000000000000
36000000000000
40000000000000
45000000000000
50000000000000
56000000000000
63000000000000
71000000000000
80000000000000
90000000000000
100000000000000
110000000000000
125000000000000
140000000000000
160000000000000
180000000000000
200000000000000
220000000000000
250000000000000
280000000000000
320000000000000
360000000000000
400000000000000
450000000000000
500000000000000
560000000000000
630000000000000
710000000000000
800000000000000
900000000000000
1000000000000000
1100000000000000
1250000000000000
1400000000000000
1600000000000000
1800000000000000
2000000000000000
2200000000000000
2500000000000000
2800000000000000
3200000000000000
3600000000000000
4000000000000000
4500000000000000
5000000000000000
5600000000000000
6300000000000000
7100000000000000
8000000000000000
9000000000000000
10000000000000000
11000000000000000
12500000000000000
14000000000000000
16000000000000000
18000000000000000
20000000000000000
22000000000000000
25000000000000000
28000000000000000
32000000000000000
36000000000000000
40000000000000000
45000000000000000
50000000000000000
56000000000000000
63000000000000000
71000000000000000
80000000000000000
90000000000000000
100000000000000000
110000000000000000
125000000000000000
140000000000000000
160000000000000000
180000000000000000
200000000000000000
220000000000000000
250000000000000000
280000000000000000
320000000000000000
360000000000000000
400000000000000000
450000000000000000
500000000000000000
560000000000000000
630000000000000000
710000000000000000
800000000000000000
900000000000000000
1000000000000000000
1100000000000000000
1250000000000000000
1400000000000000000
1600000000000000000
1800000000000000000
2000000000000000000
2200000000000000000
2500000000000000000
2800000000000000000
3200000000000000000
3600000000000000000
4000000000000000000
4500000000000000000
5000000000000000000
5600000000000000000
6300000000000000000
7100000000000000000
8000000000000000000
9000000000000000000
10000000000000000000
11000000000000000000
12500000000000000000
14000000000000000000
16000000000000000000
18000000000000000000
20000000000000000000
22000000000000000000
25000000000000000000
28000000000000000000
32000000000000000000
36000000000000000000
40000000000000000000
45000000000000000000
50000000000000000000
56000000000000000000
63000000000000000000
71000000000000000000
80000000000000000000
90000000000000000000
100000000000000000000
110000000000000000000
125000000000000000000
140000000000000000000
160000000000000000000
180000000000000000000
200000000000000000000
220000000000000000000
250000000000000000000
280000000000000000000
320000000000000000000
360000000000000000000
400000000000000000000
450000000000000000000
500000000000000000000
560000000000000000000
630000000000000000000
710000000000000000000
800000000000000000000
900000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50

overboard from the ship *Java* during a tremendous monsoon, several hundred miles away from any land. How could he possibly have escaped death? The Captain, whom Courtenay Despard found out and questioned, said he threw over a hen-coop and a pail. These could not save him. Despard also inquired for months from every ship that arrived from those parts, but could learn nothing. The next ship that came from New South Wales foundered off the coast of Africa. Three passengers escaped to Sierra Leone, and thence to England. Despard learned their names, but they were not Brandon. The information which one of them, named Wheeler, gave to the ship-owners afforded no hope of his having been found by this ship, even if it had been possible. It was simply impossible, however, for the *Falcon* did not pass the spot where poor Brandon fell overboard till months had elapsed.

All these things I knew, and they came to my mind. She did not notice my emotion, but after a pause she looked at me again with the same earnestness, and said,

"*My brother Frank is not dead.*"

This surprised me as much as the other.

"Are you sure?" said I, reverently.

"I am."

"How did you learn this? All who have inquired say that both of your brothers are dead."

"*They* told me," said she, "many times. *They* said that my brothers had not come among them to their own place, as they would have had to come if they had left the earth."

She spoke solemnly and with mysterious emphasis. I said nothing, for I knew not what to say.

On going home and thinking over this, I saw that she believed herself to have the power of communicating with the departed. I did not know whether this intelligence, which she believed she had received, had been gained in her trance, or whether she thought that she had recent interviews with those on high. I went to see her again, and asked this. She told me that once since her recovery she had fallen into that state, and had been, as she called it, "in her home."

I ventured to ask her more about what she considered a communion with the departed. She tried to speak, but looked like one who could not find words. It was still the same as before. She has in her mind thoughts which can not be expressed by any human language. She will not be able to express them till such a language is obtained. Yet she gave me one idea, which has been in my mind ever since.

She said that the language of those among whom she has been has nothing on earth which is like it except music. If our music could be developed to an indefinite extent it might at last begin to resemble it. Yet she said that she sometimes heard strains here in the Holy Mass which reminded her of that language, and might be intelligible to an immortal.

This is the idea which she imparted to me, and I have thought of it ever since.

August 23.—Great things have happened.

When I last wrote I had gained the idea of transforming music into a language. The thought came to me that I, who thirst for music, and love it and cherish it above all things—to whom it is an hourly comfort and solace—that I might rise to utter forth to her sounds which she might hear. I had already seen enough of her spiritual tone to know what sympathies and emotions might best be acted upon. I saw her several times, so as to stimulate myself to a higher and purer exercise of whatever genius I may have.

I was encouraged by the thought that from my earliest childhood, as I began to learn to speak so I began to learn to sing. As I learned to read printed type so I read printed music. The thoughts of composers in music thus became as legible to me as those of composers in words. So all my life my knowledge has widened, and with that knowledge my love has increased. This has been my one aim in life—my joy and my delight. Thus it came to pass that at last, when alone with my Cremona, I could utter all my own thoughts, and pour forth every feeling that was in my heart. This was a language with me. I spoke it, yet there was no one who could understand it fully. Only one had I ever met with to whom I told this besides yourself—she could accompany me—she could understand and follow me wherever I led. I could speak this language to her, and she could hear and comprehend. This one was my Bice.

Now that *she* had told me this I grasped at the thought. Never before had the idea entered my mind of trying upon her the effect of my music. I had given it up for her sake while she was with me, not liking to cause any sound to disturb her rapt and melancholy mood.

But now I began to understand how it was with her. She had learned the language of the highest places and had heard the New Song. She stood far above me, and if she could not understand my music it would be from the same reason that a grown man can not comprehend the words of a lisping, stammering child. She had that language in its fullness. I had it only in its crudest rudiments.

Now Bice learned my words and followed me. She knew my utterance. I was the master—she the disciple. But here was one who could lead me. I would be the follower and disciple. From her I could learn more than in all my life I could ever discover by my own unassisted efforts.

It was mine, therefore, to struggle to overcome the lisping, stammering utterance of my purely earthly music; to gain from her some knowledge of the mood of that holier, heavenly expression, so that at last I might be able in some degree to speak to this exile the language of the home which she loved; that we, by holding commune in this language, might rise together to a higher spiritual realm, and that she in her solitude might receive at least some associate.

So I proposed to her to come back and stay with me again. She consented at once.

Before that memorable evening I purified my heart by fasting and prayer. I was like one who was seeking to ascend into heaven to take part in that celestial communion, to join in the New Song, the music of the angels.

By fasting and prayer I sought so to ascend, and to find thoughts and fit utterance for those thoughts. I looked upon my office as similar to that of the holy prophets of old. I felt that I had a power of utterance if the Divine One would only inspire.

I fasted and prayed that so I might reduce

this grosser material frame, and sharpen and quicken every nerve, and stimulate every fibre of the brain. So alone could I most nearly approach to the commune of spirits. Thus had those saints and prophets of old done when they had entered upon the search after this communion, and they had received their reward, even the visitation of angels and the vision of the blessed.

A prophet—yes—now, in these days, it is left for the prophet to utter forth his inspiration by no other way than that of music.

So I fasted and prayed. I took up the words from the holy priesthood, and I said, as they say:

Munda cor meum, ac labia mea, Omnipotens Deus, qui labia Isaiae prophetae, calculo mundasti ignito!

For so Isaiah had been exalted till he heard the language of heaven, the music of the seraphim.

She, my divinity, my adored, enshrined again in my house, bore herself as before—kind to me and gentle beyond all expression, but with thoughts of her own that placed between us a gulf as wide as that which separates the mortal from the immortal.

On that evening she was with me in the parlor which looks out upon the Northwest Arm. The moon shone down there, the dark, rocky hills on the opposite side rose in heavy masses. The servants were away in the city. We were alone.

Ah, my Cremona! if a material instrument were ever able to utter forth sounds to which immortals might listen, thou, best gift of my father, thou canst utter them!

"You are pale," said she, for she was always kindly and affectionate as a mother with a child, as a guardian angel with his ward. "You are pale. You always forget yourself for others, and now you suffer anxiety for me. Do not suffer. I have my consolations."

I did not make any reply, but took my Cremona, and sought to lift up all my soul to a level with hers, to that lofty realm where her spirit ever wandered, that so I might not be comfortless. She started at the first tone that I struck forth, and looked at me with her large, earnest eyes. I found my own gaze fixed on hers, rapt and entranced. Now there came at last the inspiration so longed for, so sought for. It came from where her very soul looked forth into mine, out of the glory of her lustrous, spiritual eyes. They grew brighter with an almost immortal radiance, and all my heart rose up till it seemed ready to burst in the frenzy of that inspired moment.

Now I felt the spirit of prophecy, I felt the afflatus of the inspired sibyl or seer, and the voice of music which for a lifetime I had sought to utter forth now at last sounded as I longed that it should sound.

I exulted in that sound. I knew that at last I had caught the tone, and from her. I knew its meaning and exulted, as the poet or the musician must always exult when some idea sublimer than any which he has ever known is wafted over his upturned spiritual gaze.

She shared my exultation. There came over her face swiftly, like the lightning flash, an expression of surprise and joy. So the face of the exile lightens up at the throbbing of his heart, when, in some foreign land, he suddenly and unexpectedly hears the sound of his own language. So his eyes light up, and his heart beats faster, and even amidst the very longing of his soul after home, the desire after that home is appeased by these its most hallowed associations.

And the full meaning of that eloquent gaze of hers as her soul looked into mine became all apparent to me. "Speak on," it said; "sound on, oh strains of the language of my home! Unheard so long, now heard at last."

I knew that I was comprehended. Now all the feelings of the melancholy months came rushing over my heart, and all the holiest ideas which had animated my life came thronging into my mind, bursting forth into tones, as though of their own accord, involuntarily, as words come forth in a dream.

"Oh thou," I said, in that language which my own lips could not utter—"oh thou whom I saved from the tomb, the life to which I restored thee is irksome; but there remains a life to which at last thou shalt attain.

"Oh thou," I said, "whose spirit moves among the immortals, I am mortal yet immortal! My soul seeks commune with them. I yearn after that communion. Life here on earth is not more dear to me than to thee. Help me to rise above it. Thou hast been on high, show me too the way.

"Oh thou," I said, "who hast seen things ineffable, impart to me thy confidence. Let me know thy secret. Receive me as the companion of thy soul. Shut not thyself up in solitude. Listen, I can speak thy language.

"Attend," I cried, "for it is not for nothing that the Divine One has sent thee back. Live not these mortal days in loneliness and in uselessness. Regard thy fellow-mortals and seek to bless them. Thou hast learned the mystery of the highest. Let me be thine interpreter. All that thou hast learned I will communicate to man.

"Rise up," I cried, "to happiness and to labor. Behold! I give thee a purpose in life. Blend thy soul with mine, and let me utter thy thoughts so that men shall hear and understand. For I know that the highest truth of highest Heaven means nothing more than love. Gather up all thy love, let it flow forth to thy fellowmen. This shall be at once the labor and the consolation of thy life."

Now all this, and much more—far more—was expressed in the tones that flowed from my Cremona. It was all in my heart. It came forth. It was apprehended by her. I saw it, I knew it, and I exulted. Her eyes dilated more widely—my words were not unworthy of her hearing. I then was able to tell something which could rouse her from her stupor. Oh, Music! Divine Music! What power thou hast over the soul!

There came over her face an expression which I never saw before; one of peace ineffable—the peace that passeth understanding. Ah me! I seemed to draw her to myself. For she rose and walked toward me. And a great calm came over my own soul. My Cremona spoke of peace—soft, sweet, and deep; the profound peace that dwelleth in the soul which has its hope in fruition. The tone widened into sweet modulation—sweet beyond all expression.

She was so close that she almost touched me. Her eyes were still fixed on mine. Tears were there, but not tears of sorrow. Her face was so

"I DID NOT MAKE ANY REPLY, BUT TOOK MY CREMONA, AND SOUGHT TO LIFT UP ALL MY SOUL TO A LEVEL WITH HERS."

close to mine that my strength left me. My arms dropped downward. The music was over.

She held out her hand to me. I caught it in both of mine, and wet it with my tears.

"Paolo," said she, in a voice of musical tone; "Paolo, you are already one of us. You speak our language.

"You have taught me something which flows from love—duty. Yes, we will labor together; and they who live on high will learn even in their radiant home to envy us poor mortals."

I said not a word, but knelt; and holding her hand still, I looked up at her in grateful adoration.

November 28.—For the last three months I have lived in heaven. She is changed. Music has reconciled her to exile. She has found one who speaks, though weakly, the language of that home.

We hold together through this divine medium a lofty spiritual intercourse. I learn from her of that starry world in which for a brief time she was permitted to dwell. Her seraphic thoughts have become communicated to me. I have made them my own, and all my spirit has risen to a higher altitude.

So I have at last received that revelation for which I longed, and the divine thoughts with which she has inspired me I will make known to the world. How? Description is inadequate. but it is enough to say that I have decided upon an Opera as the best mode of making known these ideas.

I have resorted to one of those classical themes which, though as old as civilization, are yet ever new, because they are truth.

My Opera is on the theme of Prometheus. It refers to Prometheus Delivered. My idea is derived from her. Prometheus represents Divine Love—since he is the god who suffers unendurable agonies through his love for man. Zeus represents the old austere god of the sects and creeds—the gloomy God of Vengeance—the stern—the inexorable—the cruel.

Love endures through the ages, but at last triumphs. The chief agent in his triumph is Athene. She represents Wisdom, which, by its life and increase, at last dethrones the God of Vengeance and enthrones the God of Love.

For so the world goes on; and thus it shall be that Human Understanding, which I have personified under Athene, will at last exalt Divine Love over all, and cast aside its olden adoration of Divine Vengeance.

I am trying to give to my Opera the severe simplicity of the classical form, yet at the same time to pervade it all with the warm atmosphere of love in its widest sense. It opens with a chorus of seraphim. Prometheus laments; but the chief part is that of Athene. On that I have exhausted myself.

But where can I get a voice that can adequately render my thoughts—*our* thoughts? Where is Bice? She alone has this voice; she alone has the power of catching and absorbing into her own mind the ideas which I form; and, with it all, she alone could express them. I would wander over the earth to find her. But perhaps she is in a luxurious home, where her associates would not listen to such a proposal.

Patience! perhaps Bice may at last bring her marvelous voice to my aid.

December 15.—Every day our communion has grown more exalted. She breathes upon me the atmosphere of that radiant world, and fills my soul with rapture. I live in a sublime enthusiasm. We hold intercourse by means of music. We stand upon a higher plane than that of common men. She has raised me there, and has made me to be a partaker in her thoughts.

Now I begin to understand something of the radiant world to which she was once for a brief time borne. I know her lost joys; I share in her longings. In me, as in her, there is a deep, unquenchable thirst after those glories that are present there. All here seems poor and mean. No material pleasure can for a moment allure.

I live in a frenzy. My soul is on fire. Music is my sole thought and utterance. Colonel Despard thinks that I am mad. My friends here pity me. I smile within myself when I think of pity being given by them to *me*. Kindly souls! could they but have one faint idea of the unspeakable joys to which I have attained!

My Cremona is my voice. It expresses all things for me. Ah, sweet companion of my soul's flight! my Guide, my Guardian Angel, my Inspirer! had ever before two mortals while on earth a lot like ours? Who else besides us in this life ever learned the joys of pure spiritual communion? We rise on high together. Our souls are borne up in company. When we hold commune we cease to be mortals.

My Opera is finished. The radiancy of that Divine Love which has inundated all the being of Edith has been imparted to me in some measure sufficient to enable me to breathe forth to human ears tones which have been caught from immortal voices. She has given me ideas. I have made them audible and intelligible to men.

I have had one performance of my work, or rather our work, for it is all hers. Hers are the thoughts, mine is only the expression.

I sought out a place of solitude in which I might perform undisturbed and without interruption the theme which I have tried to unfold.

Opposite my house is a wild, rocky shore covered with the primeval woods. Here in one place there rises a barren rock, perfectly bare of verdure, which is called Mount Misery. I chose this place as the spot where I might give my rehearsal.

She was the audience—I was the orchestra—we two were alone.

Mount Misery is one barren rock without a blade of grass on all its dark iron-like surface. Around it is a vast accumulation of granite boulders and vast rocky ledges. The trees are stunted, the very ferns can scarcely find a place to grow.

It was night. There was not a cloud in the sky. The moon shone with marvelous lustre.

Down in front of us lay the long arm of the sea that ran up between us and the city. On the opposite side were woods, and beyond them rose the citadel, on the other side of which the city lay nestling at its base like those Rhenish towns which lie at the foot of feudal castles.

On the left hand all was a wilderness; on the right, close by, was a small lake, which seemed like a sheet of silver in the moon's rays. Farther on lay the ocean, stretching in its boundless extent away to the horizon. There lay islands and sand-banks with light-houses. There, under the moon, lay a broad path of golden light—molten gold—unruffled—undisturbed in that dead calm.

My Opera begins with an Alleluia Chorus. I have borrowed words from the Angel Song at the opening of "Faust" for my score. But the music has an expression of its own, and the words are feeble; and the only comfort is, that these words will be lost in the triumph strain of the tones that accompany them.

She was with me, exulting where I was exultant, sad where I was sorrowful; still with her air of Guide and Teacher. She is my Egeria. She is my Inspiring Muse. I invoke her when I sing.

But my song carried her away. Her own thoughts expressed by my utterance were returned to her, and she yielded herself up altogether to their power.

Ah me! there is one language common to all on earth, and to all in heaven, and that is music.

I exulted then on that bare, blasted rock. I triumphed. She joined me in it all. We exulted together. We triumphed. We mourned, we rejoiced, we despaired, we hoped, we sung alleluias in our hearts. The very winds were still. The very moon seemed to stay her course. All nature was hushed.

She stood before me, white, slender, aerial, like a spirit from on high, as pure, as holy, as stainless. Her soul and mine were blended. We moved to one common impulse. We obeyed one common motive.

What is this? Is it love? Yes; but not as men call love. Ours is heavenly love, ardent, but yet spiritual; intense, but without passion; a burning love like that of the cherubim; all-consuming, all-engrossing, and enduring for evermore.

Have I ever told her my admiration? Yes; but not in words. I have told her so in music, in every tone, in every strain. She knows that I am hers. She is my divinity, my muse, my better genius—the nobler half of my soul.

I have laid all my spirit at her feet, as one prostrates himself before a divinity. She has accepted that adoration and has been pleased.

We are blended. We are one, but not after an earthly fashion, for never yet have I even touched her hand in love. It is our spirits, our real selves—not our merely visible selves—that love; yet that love is so intense that I would die for evermore if my death could make her life more sweet.

She has heard all this from my Cremona.

Here, as we stood under the moon, I thought her a spirit with a mortal lover. I recognized the full meaning of the sublime legend of Numa and Egeria. The mortal aspires in purity of heart, and the immortal comes down and assists and responds to his aspirations.

Our souls vibrated in unison to the expression of heavenly thoughts. We threw ourselves into the rapture of the hour. We trembled, we thrilled, till at last frail mortal nature could scarcely endure the intensity of that perfect joy.

So we came to the end. The end is a chorus of angels. They sing the divinest of songs that is written in Holy Revelation. All the glory of that song reaches its climax in the last strain:

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!"

We wept together. But we dried our tears and went home, musing on that "tearless eternity" which lies before us.

Morning is dawning as I write, and all the feeling of my soul can be expressed in one word, the sublimest of all words, which is intelligible to many of different languages and different races. I will end with this:

"Alleluia!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THIS MUST END.

THE note which accompanied Langhetti's journal was as follows:

"HALIFAX, *December* 18, 1848.

"TERESUOLA MIA DOLCISSIMA,—I send you my journal, *sorella carissima*. I have been silent for a long time. Forgive me. I have been sad and in affliction. But affliction has turned to joy, and I have learned things unknown before.

"*Teresina mia*, I am coming back to England immediately. You may expect to see me at any time during the next three months. *She* will be with me; but so sensitive is she—so strange would she be to you—that I do not know whether it will be well for you to see her or not. I dare not let her be exposed to the gaze of any one unknown to her. Yet, sweetest *sorellina*, perhaps I may be able to tell her that I have a dearest sister, whose heart is love, whose nature is noble, and who could treat her with tenderest care.

"I intend to offer my Opera to the world at London. I will be my own impresario. Yet I want one thing, and that is a Voice. Oh for a Voice like that of Bice! But it is idle to wish for her.

"Never have I heard any voice like hers, my Teresina. God grant that I may find her!

"Expect soon and suddenly to see your most loving brother,

PAOLO."

Mrs. Thornton showed this note to Despard the next time they met. He had read the journal in the mean time.

"So he is coming back?" said he.

"Yes."

"And with this marvelous girl?"

"Yes."

"She seems to me like a spirit."

"And to me."

"Paolo's own nature is so lofty and so spiritual that one like her is intelligible to him. Happy is it for her that he found her."

"Paolo is more spiritual than human. He has no materialism. He is spiritual. I am of the earth, earthy; but my brother is a spirit imprisoned, who chafes at his bonds and longs to be free. And think what Paolo has done for her in his sublime devotion!"

"I know others who would do as much," said Despard, in a voice that seemed full of tears; "I know others who, like him, would go to the grave to rescue the one they loved, and make all life one long devotion. I know others," he continued, "who would gladly die, if by dying they could gain what he has won—the possession of the one they love. Ah me! Paolo is happy and blessed beyond all men. Between him and her there is no insuperable barrier, no gulf as deep as death."

Despard spoke impetuously, but suddenly checked himself.

"I received," said he, "by the last mail a letter from my uncle in Halifax. He is ordered off to the Cape of Good Hope. I wrote him a very long time ago, as I told you, asking him to tell me without reserve all that he knew about my father's death. I told him plainly that there was a mystery about it which I was determined to solve. I reproached him for keeping it secret from me, and reminded him that I was now a mature man, and that he had no right nor any reason to maintain any further secrecy. I insisted on knowing all, no matter what it might be.

"I received his letter by the last mail. Here it is;" and he handed it to her. "Read it when you get home. I have written a few words to you, little playmate, also. He has told me all. Did you know this before?"

"Yes, Lama," said Mrs. Thornton, with a look of sorrowful sympathy.

"You knew all my father's fate?"

"Yes, Lama."

"And you kept it secret?"

"Yes, Lama. How could I bear to tell you and give you pain?"

Her voice trembled as she spoke. Despard looked at her with an indescribable expression.

"One thought," said he, slowly, "and one feeling engrosses all my nature, and even this

news that I have heard can not drive it away. Even the thought of my father's fate, so dark and so mysterious, can not weaken the thoughts that have all my life been supreme. Do you know, little playmate, what those thoughts are?"

She was silent. Despard's hand wandered over the keys. They always spoke in low tones, which were almost whispers, tones which were inaudible except to each other. And Mrs. Thornton had to bow her head close to his to hear what he said.

"I must go," said Despard, after a pause, "and visit Brandon again. I do not know what I can do, but my father's death requires further examination. This man Potts is intermingled with it. My uncle gives dark hints. I must make an examination."

"And you are going away again?" said Mrs. Thornton, sadly.

Despard sighed.

"Would it not be better," said he, as he took her hand in his—"would it not be better for you, little playmate, if I went away from you forever?"

She gave him one long look of sad reproach. Then tears filled her eyes.

"This can not go on forever," she murmured. "It must come to that at last!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

BEATRICE'S JOURNAL.

October 30, 1848.—My recovery has been slow, and I am still far from well. I stay in my room almost altogether. Why should I do otherwise? Day succeeds day, and each day is a blank.

My window looks on the sea, and I can sit there and feed my heart on the memories which that sea calls up. It is company for me in my solitude. It is music, though I can not hear its voice. Oh, how I should rejoice if I could get down by its margin and touch its waters! Oh how I should rejoice if those waters would flow over me forever!

November 15.—Why I should write any thing now I do not know. This uneventful life offers nothing to record. Mrs. Compton is as timid, as gentle, and as affectionate as ever. Philips, poor, timorous, kindly soul, sends me flowers by her. Poor wretch, how did he ever get here? How did Mrs. Compton?

December 28.—In spite of my quiet habits and constant seclusion I feel that I am under some surveillance, not from Mrs. Compton, but from others. I have been out twice during the last fortnight and perceived this plainly. Men in the walks who were at work quietly followed me with their eyes. I see that I am watched. I did not know that I was of sufficient importance.

Yesterday a strange incident occurred. Mrs. Compton was with me, and by some means or other my thoughts turned to one about whom I have often tried to form conjectures—my mother. How could she ever have married a man like my father? What could she have been like? Suddenly I turned to Mrs. Compton, and said:

"Did you ever see my mother?"

What there could have been in my question I can not tell, but she trembled and looked at me with greater fear in her face than I had ever seen there before. This time she seemed to be afraid of me. I myself felt a cold chill run through my frame. That *awful thought* which I had once before known flashed across my mind.

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Compton, suddenly, "oh, don't look at me so; don't look at me so!"

"I don't understand you," said I, slowly.

She hid her face in her hands and began to weep. I tried to soothe her, and with some success, for after a time she regained her composure. Nothing more was said. But since then one thought, with a long series of attendant thoughts, has weighed down my mind. *Who am I? What am I? What am I doing here? What do these people want with me? Why do they guard me?*

I can write no more.

January 14, 1849.—The days drag on. Nothing new has happened. I am tormented by strange thoughts. I see this plainly that there are times when I inspire fear in this house. Why is this?

Since that day, many, many months ago, when they all looked at me in horror, I have seen none of them. Now Mrs. Compton has exhibited the same fear. There is a restraint over her. Yes, she too fears me. Yet she is kind; and poor Philips never forgets to send me flowers.

I could smile at the idea of any one fearing me, if it were not for the terrible thoughts that arise within my mind.

February 12.—Of late all my thoughts have changed, and I have been inspired with an uncontrollable desire to escape. I live here in luxury, but the meanest house outside would be far preferable. Every hour here is a sorrow, every day a misery. Oh, me! if I could but escape!

Once in that outer world I care not what might happen. I would be willing to do menial labor to earn my bread. Yet it need not come to that. The lessons which Paolo taught me have been useful in more ways than one. I know that I at least need not be dependent.

He used to say to me that if I chose to go on the stage and sing, I could do something better than gain a living or make a fortune. He said I could interpret the ideas of the Great Masters, and make myself a blessing to the world.

Why need I stay here when I have a voice which he used to deign to praise? He did not praise it because he loved me; but I think he loved me because he loved my voice. He loves my voice better than me. And that other one! Ah me—will he ever hear my voice again? Did he know how sweet his voice was to me? Oh me! its tones ring in my ears and in my heart night and day.

March 5.—My resolution is formed. This may be my last entry. I pray to God that it may be. I will trust in him and fly. At night they can not be watching me. There is a door at the north end, the key of which is always in it. I can steal out by that direction and gain my liberty.

Oh Thou who hearest prayer, grant deliverance to the captive!

Farewell now, my journal; I hope never to see you again! Yet I will secrete you in this chamber, for if I am compelled to return I may be glad to seek you again.

March 6.—Not yet! Not yet!

Alas! and since yesterday what things have happened! Last night I was to make my attempt. They dined at eight, and I waited for

"OH!" CRIED MRS. COMPTON, SUDDENLY, "OH, DON'T LOOK AT ME SO; DON'T LOOK AT ME SO!"

them to retire. I waited long. They were longer than usual.

At about ten o'clock Mrs. Compton came into my room, with as frightened a face as usual. "They want you," said she.

I knew whom she meant. "Must I go?" said I.

"Alas, dear child, what can you do? Trust in God. He can save you."

"He alone can save me," said I, "if He will. It has come to this that I have none but Him in whom I can trust."

She began to weep. I said no more, but obeyed the command and went down.

Since I was last there months had passed—months of suffering and anguish in body and mind. The remembrance of my last visit there came over me as I entered. Yet I did not tremble or falter. I crossed the threshold and entered the room, and stood before them in silence.

I saw the three men who had been there before. *He* and his son, and the man Clark. They had all been drinking. Their voices were loud and their laughter boisterous as I approached. When I entered they became quiet, and all three stared at me. At last *he* said to his son,

"She don't look any fatter, does she, Johnnie?"

"She gets enough to eat, any how," answered John.

"She's one of them kind," said the man Clark, "that don't fatten up. But then, Johnnie, you needn't talk—you haven't much fat yourself, lad."

"Hard work," said John, whereupon the others, thinking it an excellent joke, burst into hoarse laughter. This put them into great good-humor with themselves, and they began to turn their attention to me again. Not a word was said for some time.

"Can you dance?" said *he*, at last, speaking to me abruptly.

"Yes," I answered.

"Ah! I thought so. I paid enough for your education, any how. It would be hard if you hadn't learned any thing else except squalling and banging on the piano."

I said nothing.

"Why do you stare so, d—n you?" he cried, looking savagely at me.

I looked at the floor.

"Come now," said he. "I sent for you to see if you can dance. Dance!"

I stood still. "Dance!" he repeated with an oath. "Do you hear?"

"I can not," said I.

"Perhaps you want a partner," continued he, with a sneer. "Here, Johnnie, go and help her."

"I'd rather not," said John.

"Clark, you try it—you were always gay," and he gave a hoarse laugh.

"Yes, Clark," cried John. "Now's your chance."

Clark hesitated for a moment, and then came toward me. I stood with my arms folded, and looked at him fixedly. I was not afraid. For I thought in that hour of who these men were, and what they were. My life was in their hands, but I held life cheap. I rose above the fear of the moment, and felt myself their superior.

Clark came up to me and stopped. I did not move.

"Curse her!" said he. "I'd as soon dance with a ghost. She looks like one, any how."

He laughed boisterously.

"He's afraid. He's getting superstitious!" he cried. "What do you think of that, Johnnie?"

"Well," drawled John, "it's the first time I ever heard of Clark being afraid of any thing."

These words seemed to sting Clark to the quick.

"Will you dance?" said he, in a hoarse voice.

I made no answer.

"Curse her! make her dance!" *he* shouted, starting up from his chair. "Don't let her bully you, you fool!"

Clark stepped toward me and laid one heavy hand on mine, while he attempted to pass the other round my waist. At the horror of his polluting touch all my nature seemed transformed. I started back. There came something like a frenzy over me. I neither knew nor cared what I said.

Yet I spoke slowly, and it was not like passion. All that I had read in that manuscript was in my heart, the very spirit of the murdered Despard seemed to inspire me.

"Touch me not," I said. "Trouble me not. I am near enough to Death already. And you," I cried, stretching out my hand to *him*, "THUG! never again will I obey one command of yours. Kill me if you choose, and send me after Colonel Despard."

These words seemed to blast and wither them. Clark shrank back. *He* gave a groan, and clutched the arm of his chair. John looked in fear from one to the other, and stammered with an oath:

"She knows all! Mrs. Compton told her."

"Mrs. Compton never knew it, about the Thug," said he, and then looked up fearfully at me. They all looked once more. Again that fear which I had seen in them before was shown upon their faces.

I looked upon these wretches as though I had surveyed them from some lofty height. That one of them was my father was forgotten. I seemed to utter words which were inspired within me.

"Colonel Despard has spoken to me from the dead, and told me all," said I. "I am appointed to avenge him."

I turned and went out of the room. As I left I heard John's voice:

"If she's the devil himself, as I believe she is," he cried, "*she's got to be took down!*"

I reached my room. I lay awake all night long. A fever seemed raging in all my veins. Now with a throbbing head and trembling hands I write this. Will these be my last words? God grant it, and give me safe deliverance. Amen! amen!

CHAPTER XXX.

SMITHERS & CO.

THE Brandon Bank, John Potts, President, had one day risen suddenly before the eyes of the astonished county and filled all men with curious speculations.

John Potts had been detestable, but now, as a Bank President, he began to be respectable, to say the least. Wealth has a charm about it which fascinates all men, even those of the oldest families, and now that this parvenu showed that he could easily employ his superfluous cash in a banking company, people began to look upon his name as still undoubtedly vulgar, yet as undoubtedly possessing the ring of gold.

His first effort to take the county by storm, by an ordinary invitation to Brandon Hall, had been sneered at every where. But this bank was a different thing. Many began to think that perhaps Potts had been an ill-used and slandered man. He had been Brandon's agent, but who could prove any thing against him after all?

There were very many who soon felt the need of the peculiar help which a bank can give if it only chooses. Those who went there found Potts marvelously accommodating. He did not seem so grasping or so suspicious as other bankers. They got what they wanted, laughed at his pleasant jokes, and assured every body that he was a much-belied man.

Surely it was by some special inspiration that Potts hit upon this idea of a bank; if he wished to make people look kindly upon him, to "be to his faults a little blind, and to his virtues very kind," he could not have conceived any better or shorter way toward the accomplishment of so desirable a result.

So lenient were these people that they looked upon all those who took part in the bank with equal indulgence. The younger Potts was considered as a very clever man, with a dry, caustic humor, but thoroughly good-hearted. Clark,

one of the directors, was regarded as bluff, and shrewd, and cautious, but full of the milk of human kindness; and Philips, the cashier, was universally liked on account of his gentle, obsequious manner.

So wide-spread and so active were the operations of this bank that people stood astonished and had nothing to say. The amount of their accommodations was enormous. Those who at first considered it a mushroom concern soon discovered their mistake; for the Brandon Bank had connections in London which seemed to give the command of unlimited means, and any sum whatever that might be needed was at once advanced where the security was at all reliable. Nor was the bank particular about security. John Potts professed to trust much to people's faces and to their character, and there were times when he would take the security without looking at it, or even decline it and be satisfied with the name.

In less than a year the bank had succeeded in gaining the fullest confidence even of those who had at first been most skeptical, and John Potts had grown to be considered without doubt one of the most considerable men in the county.

One day in March John Potts was sitting in the parlor of the bank when a gentleman walked in who seemed to be about sixty years of age. He had a slight stoop, and carried a gold-headed cane. He was dressed in black, had gray hair, and a very heavy gray beard and mustache.

"Have I the honor of addressing Mr. Potts?" said the stranger, in a peculiarly high, shrill voice.

"I'm Mr. Potts," said the other.

The stranger thereupon drew a letter from his pocket-book and handed it to Potts. The letter was a short one, and the moment Potts had read it he sprang up and held out his hand eagerly.

"Mr. Smithers, Sir!—you're welcome, Sir, I'm sure, Sir! Proud and happy, Sir, to see you, I'm sure!" said Potts, with great volubility.

Mr. Smithers, however, did not seem to see his hand, but seated himself leisurely on a chair, and looked for a moment at the opposite wall like one in thought.

He was a singular-looking old man. His skin was fresh; there was a grand, stern air upon his brow when it was in repose. The lower part of his face was hidden by his beard, and its expression was therefore lost. His eyes, however, were singularly large and luminous, although he wore spectacles and generally looked at the floor.

"I have but recently returned from a tour," said he, in the same voice; "and my junior partner has managed all the business in my absence, which has lasted more than a year. I had not the honor of being acquainted with your banking-house when I left, and as I had business up this way I thought I would call on you."

"Proud, Sir, and most happy to welcome you to our modest parlor," said Potts, obsequiously. "This is a pleasure—indeed I may say, Sir, a privilege—which I have long wished to have. In fact, I have never seen your junior partner, Sir, any more than yourself. I have only seen your agents, Sir, and have gone on and done my large business with you by writing."

Mr. Smithers bowed.

"Quite so," said he. "We have so many connections in all parts of the world that it is impossible to have the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with them all. There are some with whom we have much larger transactions than yourself whom I have never seen."

"Indeed, Sir!" exclaimed Potts, with great surprise. "Then you must do a larger business than I thought."

"We do a large business," said Mr. Smithers, thoughtfully.

"And all over the world, you said. Then you must be worth millions."

"Oh, of course, one can not do a business like ours, that commands money, without a large capital."

"Are there many who do a larger business than I do?"

"Oh yes. In New York the house of Peyton Brothers do a business of ten times the amount—yes, twenty times. In San Francisco a new house, just started since the gold discoveries, has done a business with us almost as large. In Bombay Messrs. Nickerson, Bolton, & Co. are our correspondents; in Calcutta Messrs. Hostermann, Jennings, & Black; in Hong Kong Messrs. Naylor & Tibbetts; in Sydney Messrs. Sandford & Perley. Besides these, we have correspondents through Europe and in all parts of England who do a much larger business than yours. But I thought you were aware of this," said Mr. Smithers, looking with a swift glance at Potts.

"Of course, of course," said Potts, hastily; "I knew your business was enormous, but I thought our dealings with you were considerable."

"Oh, you are doing a snug business," said Smithers, in a patronizing tone. "It is our custom whenever we have correspondents who are sound men to encourage them to the utmost. This is the reason why you have always found us liberal and prompt."

"You have done great service, Sir," said Potts. "In fact, you have made the Brandon Bank what it is to-day."

"Well," said Smithers, "we have agents every where; we heard that this bank was talked about, and knowing the concern to be in sure hands we took it up. My Junior has made arrangements with you which he says have been satisfactory."

"Very much so to me," replied Potts. "You have always found the money."

"And you, I suppose, have furnished the securities."

"Yes, and a precious good lot of them you are now holding."

"I dare say," said Smithers; "for my part I have nothing to do with the books. I merely attend to the general affairs, and trust to my Junior for particulars."

"And you don't know the exact state of our business?" said Potts, in a tone of disappointment.

"No. How should I? The only ones with which I am familiar are our American, European, and Eastern agencies. Our English correspondents are managed by my Junior."

"You must be one of the largest houses in London," said Potts, in a tone of deep admiration.

"Oh yes."

"Strange I never heard of you till two years ago or so."

"Very likely."

"There was a friend of mine who was telling me something about some Sydney merchants who

were sending consignments of wool to you. Compton & Brandon. Do you know them?"

"I have heard my Junior speak of them."

"You were in Sydney, were you not?"

"Yes, on my last tour I touched there."

"Do you know Compton & Brandon?"

"I looked in to see them. I think Brandon is dead, isn't he? Drowned at sea—or something of that sort?" said Smithers, indifferently.

"Yes," said Potts.

"Are you familiar with the banking business?" asked Smithers, suddenly.

"Well, no, not very. I haven't had much experience; but I'm growing into it."

"Ah! I suppose your directors are good business men?"

"Somewhat; but the fact is, I trust a good deal to my cashier."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Philips, a very clever man; a first-rate accountant."

"That's right. Very much indeed depends on the cashier."

"He is a most useful and reliable man."

"Your business appears to be growing, from what I have heard."

"Very fast indeed, Sir. Why, Sir, in another year I expect to control this whole county financially. There is no reason why I shouldn't. Every one of my moves is successful."

"That is right. The true mode of success in a business like yours is boldness. That is the secret of my success. Perhaps you are not aware," continued Mr. Smithers, in a confidential tone, "that I began with very little. A few thousands of pounds formed my capital. But my motto was boldness, and now I am worth I will not say how many millions. If you want to make money fast you must be bold."

"Did you make your money by banking?" asked Potts, eagerly.

"No. Much of it was made in that way, but I have embarked in all kinds of enterprises; foreign loans, railway scrip, and ventures in stock of all sorts. I have lost millions, but I have made ten times more than ever I lost. If you want to make money, you must go on the same plan."

"Well, I'm sure," said Potts, "I'm bold enough. I'm enlarging my business every day in all directions."

"That's right."

"I control the county now, and hope in another year to do so in a different way."

"How so?"

"I'm thinking of setting up for Parliament—"

"An excellent idea, if it will not injure the business."

"Oh, it will not hurt it at all. Philips can manage it all under my directions. Besides, I don't mind telling a friend like you that this is the dream of my life."

"A very laudable aim, no doubt, to those who have a genius for statesmanship. But that is a thing which is altogether out of my line. I keep to business. And now, as my time is limited, I must not stay longer. I will only add that my impressions are favorable about your bank, and you may rely upon us to any extent to co-operate with you in any sound enterprise. Go on and enlarge your business, and draw on us for what you want as before. If I were you I would embark all my available means in this bank."

"Well, I'm gradually coming to that, I think," said Potts.

"Then, when you get large deposits, as you must expect, that will give you additional capital to work on. The best way when you have a bank is to use your cash in speculating in stocks. Have you tried that yet?"

"Yes, but not much."

"If you wish any thing of that kind done we will do it for you."

"But I don't know what are the best investments."

"Oh, that is very easily found out. But if you can't learn, we will let you know. The Mexican Loan just now is the most promising. Some of the California companies are working quietly, and getting enormous dividends."

"California?" said Potts; "that ought to pay."

"Oh, there's nothing like it. I cleared nearly half a million in a few months."

"A few months!" cried Potts, opening his eyes.

"Yes, we have agents who keep us well up; and so, you know, we are able to speculate to the best advantage."

"California!" said Potts, thoughtfully. "I should like to try that above all things. It has a good sound. It is like the chink of cash."

"Yes, you get the pure gold out of that. There's nothing like it."

"Do you know any chances for speculation there?"

"Yes, one or two."

"Would you have any objection to let me know?"

"Not in the least—it will extend your business. I will ask my Junior to send you any particulars you may desire."

"This California business must be the best there is, if all I hear is true."

"You haven't heard the real truth."

"Haven't I?" exclaimed Potts, in wonder. "I thought it was exaggerated."

"I could tell you stories far more wonderful than any thing you have heard."

"Tell me!" cried Potts, breathlessly.

"Well," said Smithers, confidentially, "I don't mind telling you something which is known, I'm sorry to say, in certain circles in London, and is already being acted on. One-half of our fortune has been made in California operations."

"You don't say so!"

"You see I've always been bold," continued Smithers, with an air of still greater confidence. "I read some time since in one of Humboldt's books about gold being there. At the first news of the discovery I chartered a ship and went out at once. I took every thing that could be needed. On arriving at San Francisco, where there were already very many people, I sold the cargo at an enormous profit, and hired the ship as a warehouse at enormous prices. I then organized a mining company, and put a first-rate man at the head of it. They found a place on the Sacramento River where the gold really seems inexhaustible. I worked it for some months, and forwarded two millions sterling to London. Then I left, and my company is still working."

"Why did you leave?" asked Potts, breathlessly.

"Because I could make more money by being in London. My man there is reliable. I have bound him to us by giving him a share in the business. People soon found out that Smithers & Co. had made enormous sums of money in California, but they don't know exactly how. The immense expansion of our business during the last year has filled them with wonder. For you know every piece of gold that I sent home has been utilized by my Junior."

Potts was silent, and sat looking in breathless admiration at this millionaire. All his thoughts were seen in his face. His whole heart was laid bare, and the one thing visible was an intense desire to share in that golden enterprise.

"I have organized two companies on the same principle as the last. The shares are selling at a large premium in the London market. I take a leading part in each, and my name gives stability to the enterprise. If I find the thing likely to succeed I continue; if not, why, I can easily sell out. I am on the point of organizing a third company."

"Are the shares taken up?" cried Potts, eagerly.

"No, not yet."

"Well, could I obtain some?"

"I really can't say," replied Smithers. "You might make an application to my Junior. I do nothing whatever with the details. I don't know what plans or agreements he may have been making."

"I should like exceedingly to take stock. How do the shares sell?"

"The price is high, as we wish to confine our shareholders to the richer classes. We never put it at less than £1000 a share."

"I would take any quantity."

"I dare say some may be in the market yet," said Smithers, calmly. "They probably sell at a high premium though."

"I'd pay it," said Potts.

"Well, you may write and see; I know nothing about it."

"And if they're all taken up, what then?"

"Oh—then—I really don't know. Why can't you organize a company yourself?"

"Well, you see, I don't know any thing about the place."

"True; that is a disadvantage. But you might find some people who do know."

"That would be very difficult. I do not see how we could begin. And if I did find any one, how could I trust him?"

"You'd have to do as I did—give him a share of the business."

"It would be much better if I could get some stock in one of your companies. Your experience and credit would make it a success."

"Yes, there is no doubt that our companies would all be successful since we have a man on the spot."

"And that's another reason why I should prefer buying stock from you. You see I might form a company, but what could I do?"

"Could not your cashier help you?"

"No, not in any thing of that sort."

"Well, I can say nothing about it. My Junior will tell you what chances there are."

"But while I see you personally I should be glad if you would consent to give me a chance. Have you any objection?"

"Oh no. I will mention your case the next time I write, if you wish it. Still I can not control the particular operations of the office. My control is supreme in general matters, and you see it would not be possible for me to interfere with the smaller details."

"Still you might mention me."

"I will do so," said Smithers, and taking out his pocket-book he prepared to write.

"Let me see," said he, "your Christian name is—what?"

"John—John Potts."

"John Potts," repeated the other, as he wrote it down.

Smithers rose. "You may continue to draw on us as before, and any purchases of stock which you wish will be made."

Potts thanked him profusely.

"I wish to see your cashier, to learn his mode of managing the accounts. Much depends on that, and a short conversation will satisfy me."

"Certainly, Sir, certainly," said Potts, obsequiously. "Philips!" he called.

Philips came in as timid and as shrinking as usual.

"This is Mr. Smithers, the great Smithers of Smithers & Co., Bankers; he wishes to have a talk with you."

Philips looked at the great man with deep respect and made an awkward bow.

"You may come with me to my hotel," said Smithers; and with a slight bow to Potts he left the bank, followed by Philips.

He went up stairs and into a large parlor on the second story, which looked into the street. He motioned Philips to a chair near the window, and seated himself in an arm-chair opposite.

Smithers looked at the other with a searching glance, and said nothing for some time. His large, full eyes, as they fixed themselves on the face of the other, seemed to read his inmost thoughts and study every part of his weak and irresolute character.

At length he said, abruptly, in a slow, measured voice, "Edgar Lawton!"

At the sound of this name Philips started from his chair, and stood on his feet trembling. His face, always pale, now became ashen, his lips turned white, his jaw fell, his eyes seemed to start from their sockets. He stood for a few seconds, then sank back into a chair.

Smithers eyed him steadfastly. "You see I know you," said he, after a time.

Philips cast on him an imploring look.

"The fact that I know your name," continued Smithers, "shows also that I must know something of your history. Do not forget that!"

"My—my history?" faltered Philips.

"Yes, your history. I know it all, wretched man! I knew your father whom you ruined, and whose heart you broke."

Philips said not a word, but again turned an imploring face to this man.

"I have brought you here to let you know that there is one who holds you in his power, and that one is myself. You think Potts or Clark have you at their mercy. Not so. I alone hold your fate in my hands. They dare not do any thing against you for fear of their own necks."

Philips looked
greater than his fe
"Why," he falt
You got him to sta
vanced him money
"You are the ca
"Can you tell me
owes Smithers & C
Philips looked at
"Speak!"
"Two hundred
pounds."
"And if Smither
ment to-morrow, do
would be prompt ab
Philips shook his
"Then you see t
is not so powerful a

Philips looked up now in wonder, which was greater than his fear.

"Why," he faltered, "you are Potts's friend. You got him to start the bank, and you have advanced him money."

"You are the cashier," said Smithers, calmly. "Can you tell me how much the Brandon Bank owes Smithers & Co.?"

Philips looked at the other and hesitated.

"Speak!"

"Two hundred and eighty-nine thousand pounds."

"And if Smithers & Co. chose to demand payment to-marrow, do you think the Brandon Bank would be prompt about it?"

Philips shook his head.

"Then you see that the man whom you fear is not so powerful as some others."

"I thought you were his friend?"

"Do you know who I am?"

"Smithers & Co.," said Philips, wearily.

"Well, let me tell you the plans of Smithers & Co. are beyond your comprehension. Whether they are friends to Potts or not, it seems that they are his creditors to an amount which it would be difficult for him to pay if they chose to demand it."

Philips looked up. He caught sight of the eyes of Smithers, which blazed like two dark, fiery orbs as they were fastened upon him. He shuddered.

"I merely wished to show you the weakness of the man whom you fear. Shall I tell you something else?"

Philips looked up fearfully.

"I have been in York, in Calcutta, and in Ma-

nilla; and I know what Potts did in each place. You look frightened. You have every reason to be so. I know what was done at York. I know that you were sent to Botany Bay. I know that you ran away from your father to India. I know your life there. I know how narrowly you escaped going on board the *Vishnu*, and being implicated in the Manilla murder. Madman that you were, why did you not take your poor mother and fly from these wretches forever?"

Philips trembled from head to foot. He said not a word, but bowed his head upon his knees and wept.

"Where is she now?" said Smithers, sternly. Philips mechanically raised his head, and pointed over toward Brandon Hall.

"Is she confined against her will?"

Philips shook his head.

"She stays, then, through love of you?"

Philips nodded.

"Is any one else there?" said Smithers, after a pause, and in a strange, sad voice, in which there was a faltering tone which Philips, in his fright, did not notice.

"Miss Potts," he said.

"She is treated cruelly," said Smithers. "They say she is a prisoner?"

Philips nodded.

"Has she been sick?"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Eight months, last year."

"Is she well now?"

"Yes."

Smithers bowed his head in silence, and put his hand on his heart. Philips watched him in an agony of fright, as though every instant he was apprehensive of some terrible calamity.

"How is she?" continued Smithers, after a time. "Has she ever been happy since she went there?"

Philips shook his head slowly and mournfully.

"Does her father ever show her any affection?"

"Never."

"Does her brother?"

"Never."

"Is there any one who does?"

"Yes."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Compton."

"Your mother?"

"Yes."

"I will not forget that. No, I will never forget that. Do you think that she is exposed to any danger?"

"Miss Potts?"

Smithers bowed.

"I don't know. I sometimes fear so."

"Of what kind?"

"I don't know. Almost any horrible thing may happen in that horrible place."

A pang of agony shot across the sombre brow of Smithers. He was silent for a long time.

"Have you ever slighted her?" he asked at last.

"Never," cried Philips. "I could worship her—"

Smithers smiled upon him with a smile so sweet that it chased all Philips's fears away. He took courage and began to show more calm.

"Fear nothing," said Smithers, in a gentle voice. "I see that in spite of your follies and crimes there is something good in you yet. You love your mother, do you not?"

Tears came into Philips's eyes. He sighed.

"Yes," he said, humbly.

"And you are kind to *her*—that other one?"

"I love her as my mother," said Philips, earnestly.

Smithers again relapsed into silence for a long time. At last he looked up. Philips saw his eyes this time, no longer stern and wrathful, but benignant and indulgent.

"You have been all your life under the power of merciless men," said he. "You have been led by them into folly and crime and suffering. Often you have been forced to act against your will. Poor wretch! I can save you, and I intend to do so in spite of yourself. You fear these masters of yours. You must know now that I, not they, am to be feared. They know your secret but dare not use it against you. I know it, and can use it if I choose. You have been afraid of them all your life. Fear them no longer, but fear me. These men whom you fear are in my power as well as you are. I know all their secrets—there is not a crime of theirs of which you know that I do not know also, and I know far more.

"You must from this time forth be my agent. Smithers & Co. have agents in all parts of the world. You shall be their agent in Brandon Hall. You shall say nothing of this interview to any one, not even to your mother—you shall not dare to communicate with me unless you are requested, except about such things as I shall specify. If you dare to shrink in any one point from your duty, at that instant I will come down upon you with a heavy hand. You, too, are watched. I have other agents here in Brandon besides yourself. Many of those who go to the bank as customers are my agents. You can not be false without my knowing it; and when you are false, that moment you shall be handed over to the authorities. Do you hear?"

The face of Smithers was mild, but his tone was stern. It was the warning of a just yet merciful master. All the timid nature of Philips bent in deep subjection before the powerful spirit of this man. He bowed his head in silence.

"Whenever an order comes to you from Smithers & Co. you must obey; if you do not obey instantly whatever it is, it will be at the risk of your life. Do you hear?"

Philips bowed.

"There is only one thing now in which I wish you to do any thing. You must send every month a notice directed to Mr. Smithers, Senior, about the health of *his daughter*. Should any sudden danger impend you must at once communicate it. You understand?"

Philips bowed.

"Once more I warn you always to remember that I am your master. Fail in one single thing, and you perish. Obey me, and you shall be rewarded. Now go!"

Philips rose, and, more dead than alive, tottered from the room.

When he left Smithers locked the door. He then went to the window and stood looking at Brandon Hall, with his stern face softened into sadness. He hummed low words as he stood there—words which once had been sung far away.

Among them were these, with which the strain ended:

"And the sad memory of our life below
Shall but unite us closer evermore;
No act of thine shall loose
Thee from the eternal bond,
Nor shall Revenge have power
To disunite us *there!*"

With a sigh he sat down and buried his face in his hands. His gray hair loosened and fell off as he sat there. At last he raised his head, and revealed the face of a young man whose dark hair showed the gray beard to be false.

Yet when he once more put on his wig none but a most intimate friend with the closest scrutiny could recognize there the features of Louis Brandon.

CHAPTER XXXI.

PAOLO LANGHETTI.

MANY weeks passed on, and music still formed the chief occupation in life for Despard and Mrs. Thornton. His journey to Brandon village had been without result. He knew not what to do. The inquiries which he made every where turned out useless. Finally Thornton informed him that it was utterly hopeless, at a period so long after the event, to attempt to do any thing whatever. Enough had been done long ago. Now nothing more could possibly be effected.

Baffled, but not daunted, Despard fell back for the present from his purpose, yet still cherished it and wrote to different quarters for information. Meantime he had to return to his life at Holby, and Mrs. Thornton was still ready to assist him.

So the time went on, and the weeks passed, till one day in March Despard went up as usual. On entering the parlor he heard voices, and saw a stranger. Mrs. Thornton greeted him as usual and sat down smiling. The stranger rose, and he and Despard looked at one another.

He was of medium size and slight in figure. His brow was very broad and high. His hair was black, and clustered in curls over his head. His eyes were large, and seemed to possess an unfathomable depth, which gave them a certain undefinable and mystic meaning—liquid eyes, yet lustrous, where all the soul seemed to live and show itself—benignant in their glance, yet lofty, like the eyes of a being from some superior sphere. His face was thin and shaven close, his lips also were thin, with a perpetual smile of marvelous sweetness and gentleness hovering about them. It was such a face as artists love to give to the Apostle John—the sublime, the divine, the loving, the inspired.

"You do not know him," said Mrs. Thornton. "It is Paolo!"

Despard at once advanced and greeted him with the warmest cordiality.

"I was only a little fellow when I saw you last, and you have changed somewhat since then," said Despard. "But when did you arrive? I knew that you were expected in England, but was not sure that you would come here."

"What! *Teresuola mia*," said Langhetti, with a fond smile at his sister. "Were you really not sure, *sorellina*, that I would come to see you first of all? Infidel!" and he shook his head at her, playfully.

A long conversation followed, chiefly about Langhetti's plans. He was going to engage a place in London for his opera, but wished first to secure a singer. Oh, if he only could find Bice—his Bicina, the divinest voice that mortal ever heard.

Despard and Mrs. Thornton exchanged glances, and at last Despard told him that there was a person of the same name at Brandon Hall. She was living in a seclusion so strict that it seemed confinement, and there was a mystery about her situation which he had tried without success to fathom.

Langhetti listened with a painful surprise that seemed like positive anguish.

"Then I must go myself. Oh, my Bicina—to what misery have you come— But do you say that you have been there?"

"Yes."

"Did you go to the Hall?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I know the man to be a villain indescribable—"

Langhetti thought for a moment, and then said,

"True, he is all that, and perhaps more than you imagine."

"I have done the utmost that can be done!" said Despard.

"Perhaps so; still each one wishes to try for himself, and though I can scarce hope to be more successful than you, yet I must try, if only for my own peace of mind. Oh, *Bicina cara!* to think of her sweet and gentle nature being subject to such torments as those ruffians can inflict!

"You do not know how it is," said he at last, very solemnly; "but there are reasons of transcendent importance why Bice should be rescued. I can not tell them; but if I dared mention what I hope, if I only dared to speak my thoughts, you—you," he cried, with piercing emphasis, and in a tone that thrilled through Despard, to whom he spoke, "you would make it the aim of all your life to save her."

"I do not understand," said Despard, in astonishment.

"No, no," murmured Langhetti. "You do not; nor dare I explain what I mean. It has been in my thoughts for years. It was brought to my mind first in Hong Kong, when she was there. Only one person besides Potts can explain; only one."

"Who?" cried Despard, eagerly.

"A woman named Compton."

"Compton!"

"Yes. Perhaps she is dead. Alas, and alas, and alas, if she is! Yet could I but see that woman, I would tear the truth from her if I perished in the attempt!"

And Langhetti stretched out his long, slender hand, as though he were plucking out the very heart of some imaginary enemy.

"Think, Teresuola," said he, after a while, "if you were in captivity, what would become of my opera? Could I have the heart to think about operas, even if I believed that they contributed to the welfare of the world, if your welfare was at stake? Now you know that next to you stands Bice. I must try and save her—I

must give up all. My opera must stand aside till it be God's will that I give it forth. No, the one object of my life now must be to find Bice, to see her or to see Mrs. Compton, if she is alive."

"Is the secret of so much importance?" asked Despard.

Langhetti looked at him with mournful meaning.

"If you but suspected it," said he, "your peace of mind would be lost. I will therefore on no account tell it."

Despard looked at him wonderingly. What could he mean? How could any one affect him? His peace of mind! That had been lost long ago. And if this secret was so terrible it would distract his mind from its grief, its care, and its longing. Peace would be restored rather than destroyed.

"I must find her. I must find her," said Langhetti, speaking half to himself. "I am weak; but much can be done by a resolute will."

"Perhaps Mr. Thornton can assist you," said Despard.

Langhetti shook his head.

"No; he is a man of law, and does not understand the man who acts from feeling. I can be as logical as he, but I obey impulses which are unintelligible to him. He would simply advise me to give up the matter, adding, perhaps, that I would do myself no good. Whereas he can not understand that it makes no difference to me whether I do myself good or not; and again, that the highest good that I can do myself is to seek after her."

Mrs. Thornton looked at Despard, but he avoided her glance.

"No," said Langhetti, "I will ask assistance from another—from you, Despard. You are one who acts as I act. Come with me."

"When?"

"To-morrow morning."

"I will."

"Of course you will. You would not be a Despard if you did not. You would not be the son of your father—your father!" he repeated, in thrilling tones, as his eyes flashed with enthusiasm. "Despard!" he cried, after a pause, "your father was a man whom you might pray to now. I saw him once. Shall I ever forget the day when he calmly went to lay down his life for my father? Despard, I worship your father's memory. Come with me. Let us emulate those two noble men who once before rescued a captive. We can not risk our lives as they did. Let us at least do what we can."

"I will do exactly what you say. You can think and I will act."

"No, you must think too. Neither of us belong to the class of practical men whom the world now delights to honor; but no practical man would go on our errand. No practical man would have rescued my father. Generous and lofty acts must always be done by those who are not practical men.

"But I must go out. I must think," he continued. "I will go and walk about the grounds."

Saying this he left the room.

"Where is Edith Brandon?" asked Despard, after he had gone.

"She is here," said Mrs. Thornton.

"Have you seen her?"

"Yes."

"Is she what you anticipated?"

"More. She is indescribable. She is almost unearthly. I feel awe of her, but not fear. She is too sweet to inspire fear."

CHAPTER XXXII.

FLIGHT.

THE last entry in Beatrice's journal was made by her in the hope that it might be the last.

In her life at Brandon Hall her soul had grown stronger and more resolute. Besides, it had now come to this, that henceforth she must either stay and accept the punishment which they might contrive or fly instantly.

For she had dared them to their faces; she had told them of their crimes; she had threatened punishment. She had said that she was the avenger of Despard. If she had desired instant death she could have said no more than that. Would they pass it by? She knew their secret—the secret of secrets; she had proclaimed it to their faces. She had called Potts a Thug and disowned him as her father; what now remained?

But one thing—flight. And this she was fully resolved to try. She prepared nothing. To gain the outside world was all she wished. The need of money was not thought of; nor if it had been would it have made any difference. She could not have obtained it.

The one idea in her mind was therefore flight. She had concealed her journal under a loose piece of the flooring in one of the closets of her room, being unwilling to encumber herself with it, and dreading the result of a search in case she was captured.

She made no other preparations whatever. A light hat and a thin jacket were all that she took to resist the chill air of March. There was a fever in her veins which was heightened by excitement and suspense.

Mrs. Compton was in her room during the evening. Beatrice said but little. Mrs. Compton talked drearily about the few topics on which she generally spoke. She never dared talk about the affairs of the house.

Beatrice was not impatient, for she had no idea of trying to escape before midnight. She sat silently while Mrs. Compton talked or prosed, absorbed in her own thoughts and plans. The hours seemed to her interminable. Slowly and heavily they dragged on. Beatrice's suspense and excitement grew stronger every moment, yet by a violent effort she preserved so perfect an outward calm that a closer observer than Mrs. Compton would have failed to detect any emotion.

At last, about ten o'clock, Mrs. Compton retired, with many kind wishes to Beatrice, and many anxious counsels as to her health. Beatrice listened patiently, and made some general remarks, after which Mrs. Compton withdrew.

She was now left to herself, and two hours still remained before she could dare to venture. She paced the room fretfully and anxiously, wondering why it was that the time seemed so long, and looking from time to time at her watch in the hope of finding that half an hour had passed,

but seeing to her disappointment that only two or three minutes had gone.

At last eleven o'clock came. She stole out quietly into the hall and went to the top of the grand stairway. There she stood and listened.

The sound of voices came up from the dining-room, which was near the hall-door. She knew to whom those voices belonged. Evidently it was not yet the time for her venture.

She went back, controlling her excitement as best she might. At last, after a long, long suspense, midnight sounded.

Again she went to the head of the stairway. The voices were still heard. They kept late hours down there. Could she try now, while they were still up? Not yet.

Not yet. The suspense became agonizing. How could she wait? But she went back again to her room, and smothered her feelings until one o'clock came.

Again she went to the head of the stairway. She heard nothing. She could see a light streaming from the door of the dining-hall below. Lights, also, were burning in the hall itself; but she heard no voices.

Softly and quietly she went down stairs. The lights flashed out through the door of the dining-room into the hall; and as she arrived at the foot of the stairs she heard subdued voices in conversation. Her heart beat faster. They were all there! What if they now discovered her! What mercy would they show her, even if they were capable of mercy?

Fear lent wings to her feet. She was almost afraid to breathe for fear that they might hear her. She stole on quietly and noiselessly up the passage that led to the north end, and at last reached it.

All was dark there. At this end there was a door. On each side was a kind of recess formed by the pillars of the doorway. The door was generally used by the servants, and also by the inmates of the house for convenience.

The key was in it. There was no light in the immediate vicinity. Around it all was gloom. Near by was a stairway, which led to the servants' hall.

She took the key in her hands, which trembled violently with excitement, and turned it in the lock.

Scarcely had she done so when she heard footsteps and voices behind her. She looked hastily back, and, to her horror, saw two servants approaching with a lamp. It was impossible for her now to open the door and go out. Concealment was her only plan.

But how? There was no time for hesitation. Without stopping to think she slipped into one of the niches formed by the projecting pillars, and gathered her skirts close about her so as to be as little conspicuous as possible. There she stood awaiting the result. She half wished that she had turned back. For if she were now discovered in evident concealment what excuse could she give? She could not hope to bribe them, for she had no money. And, what was worst, these servants were the two who had been the most insolent to her from the first.

She could do nothing, therefore, but wait. They came nearer, and at last reached the door.

"Hallo!" said one, as he turned the key. "It's been unlocked!"

"It hain't been locked yet," said the other.

"Yes, it has. I locked it myself, an hour ago. Who could have been here?"

"Any one," said the other, quietly. "Our blessed young master has, no doubt, been out this way."

"No, he hasn't. He hasn't stirred from his whisky since eight o'clock."

"Nonsense! You're making a fuss about nothing. Lock the door and come along."

"Any how, I'm responsible, and I'll get a precious overhauling if this thing goes on. I'll take the key with me this time."

And saying this, the man locked the door and took out the key. Both of them then descended to the servants' hall.

The noise of that key as it grated in the lock sent a thrill through the heart of the trembling listener. It seemed to take all hope from her. The servants departed. She had not been discovered. But what was to be done? She had not been prepared for this.

She stood for some time in despair. She thought of other ways of escape. There was the hall-door, which she did not dare to try, for she would have to pass directly in front of the dining-room. Then there was the south door at the other end of the building, which was seldom used. She knew of no others. She determined to try the south door.

Quietly and swiftly she stole away, and glided, like a ghost, along the entire length of the building. It was quite dark at the south end as it had been at the north. She reached the door without accident.

There was no key in it. It was locked. Escape by that way was impossible.

She stood despairing. Only one way was now left, and that lay through the hall-door itself.

Suddenly, as she stood there, she heard footsteps. A figure came down the long hall straight toward her. There was not the slightest chance of concealment here. There were no pillars behind which she might crouch. She must stand, then, and take the consequences. Or, rather, would it not be better to walk forward and meet this new-comer? Yes; that would be best. She determined to do so.

So, with a quiet, slow step she walked back through the long corridor. About half-way she met the other. He stopped and started back.

"Miss Potts!" he exclaimed, in surprise.

It was the voice of Philips.

"Ah, Philips," said she, quietly, "I am walking about for exercise and amusement. I can not sleep. Don't be startled. It's only me."

Philips stood like one paralyzed.

"Don't be cast down," he said at last, in a trembling voice. "You have friends, powerful friends. They will save you."

"What do you mean?" asked Beatrice, in wonder.

"Never mind," said Philips, mysteriously. "It will be all right. I dare not tell. But cheer up."

"What do you mean by friends?"

"You have friends who are more powerful than your enemies, that's all," said Philips, hurriedly. "Cheer up."

Beatrice wondered. A vague thought of Brandon came over her mind, but she dismissed it at once. Yet the thought gave her a delicious joy, and at once dispelled the extreme agitation which

had thus far disturbed her. Could Philips be connected with *him?* Was *he* in reality considerate about her while shaping the course of his gloomy vengeance? These were the thoughts which flashed across her mind as she stood.

"I don't understand," said she, at last; "but I hope it may be as you say. God knows, I need friends!"

She walked away, and Philips also went onward. She walked slowly, until at last his steps died out in the distance. Then a door banged. Evidently she had nothing to fear from him. At last she reached the main hall, and stopped for a moment. The lights from the dining-room were still flashing out through the door. The grand entrance lay before her. There was the door of the hall, the only way of escape that now remained. Dare she try it?

She deliberated long. Two alternatives lay before her—to go back to her own room, or to try to pass that door. To go back was as repulsive as death, in fact more so. If the choice had been placed full before her then, to die on the spot or to go back to her room, she would have deliberately chosen death. The thought of returning, therefore, was the last upon which she could dwell, and that of going forward was the only one left. To this she gave her attention.

At last she made up her mind, and advanced cautiously, close by the wall, toward the hall-door. After a time she reached the door of the dining-room. Could she venture to pass it, and how? She paused. She listened. There were low voices in the room. Then they were still awake, still able to detect her if she passed the door.

She looked all around. The hall was wide. On the opposite side the wall was but feebly lighted. The hall lights had been put out, and those which shone from the room extended forward but a short distance. It was just possible therefore to escape observation by crossing the doorway along the wall that was most distant from it.

Yet before she tried this she ventured to put forward her head so as to peep into the room. She stooped low and looked cautiously and slowly.

The three were there at the farthest end of the room. Bottles and glasses stood before them, and they were conversing in low tones. Those tones, however, were not so low but that they reached her ears. They were speaking about *her*.

"How could she have found it out?" said Clark.

"Mrs. Compton only knows *one thing*," said Potts, "and that is *the secret about her*. She knows nothing more. How could she?"

"Then how could that cursed girl have found out about the Thug business?" exclaimed John.

There was no reply.

"She's a deep one," said John, "d—d deep—deeper than I ever thought. I always said she was plucky—cursed plucky—but now I see she's deep too—and I begin to have my doubts about the way she ought to be took down."

"I never could make her out," said Potts. "And now I don't even begin to understand how she could know that which only we have known. Do you think, Clark, that the devil could have told her of it?"

"Yes," said Clark. "Nobody but the devil could have told her that, and my belief is that she's the devil himself. She's the only person I ever felt afraid of. D—n it, I can't look her in the face."

Beatrice retreated and passed across to the opposite wall. She did not wish to see or hear more. She glided by. She was not noticed. She heard John's voice—sharp and clear—

"We'll have to begin to-morrow and take her down—that's a fact." This was followed by silence.

Beatrice reached the door. She turned the knob. Oh, joy! it was not locked. It opened.

Noiselessly she passed through; noiselessly she shut it behind her. She was outside. She was free.

The moon shone brightly. It illumined the lawn in front and the tops of the clumps of trees whose dark foliage rose before her. She saw all this; yet, in her eagerness to escape, she saw nothing more, but sped away swiftly down the steps, across the lawn, and under the shade of the trees.

Which way should she go? There was the main avenue which led in a winding direction toward the gate and the porter's lodge. There was also another path which the servants generally took. This led to the gate also. Beatrice thought that by going down this path she might come near the gate and then turn off to the wall and try and climb over.

A few moments of thought were sufficient for her decision. She took the path and went hurriedly along, keeping on the side where the shadow was thickest.

She walked swiftly, until at length she came to a place where the path ended. It was close by the porter's lodge. Here she paused to consider.

Late as it was there were lights in the lodge and voices at the door. Some one was talking with the porter. Suddenly the voices ceased and a man came walking toward the place where she stood.

To dart into the thick trees where the shadow lay deepest was the work of a moment. She stood and watched. But the underbrush was dense, and the crackling which she made attracted the man's attention. He stopped for a moment, and then rushed straight toward the place where she was.

Beatrice gave herself up for lost. She rushed on wildly, not knowing where she went. Behind her was the sound of her pursuer. He followed resolutely and relentlessly. There was no refuge for her but continued flight.

Onward she sped, and still onward, through the dense underbrush, which at every step gave notice of the direction which she had taken. Perhaps if she had been wiser she would have plunged into some thick growth of trees into the midst of absolute darkness and there remained still. As it was she did not think of this. Escape was her only thought, and the only way to this seemed to be by flight.

So she fled; and after her came her remorseless, her unpitying pursuer. Fear lent wings to her feet. She fled on through the underbrush that crackled as she passed and gave notice of her track through the dark, dense groves; yet still amidst darkness and gloom her pursuer followed.

"ONWARD SH

At last, through
ness, she sank down
She could do no mor
The pursuer came n
in that thick grove th
not find her. Beatr
the underbrush all a
for her.
She crouched down
breathe. She took re
and determined to w
give up his search.
Beatrice thought th
her fear she waited fi
interminable period.
make a movement.
rose to her feet and

"ONWARD SHE SPED, AND STILL ONWARD, THROUGH THE DENSE UNDERBRUSH."

At last, through utter weakness and weariness, she sank down. Despair came over her. She could do no more.

The pursuer came up. So dense was the gloom in that thick grove that for some time he could not find her. Beatrice heard the crackling of the underbrush all around. He was searching for her.

She crouched down low and scarcely dared to breathe. She took refuge in the deep darkness, and determined to wait till her pursuer might give up his search. At last all was still.

Beatrice thought that he had gone. Yet in her fear she waited for what seemed to her an interminable period. At last she ventured to make a movement. Slowly and cautiously she rose to her feet and advanced. She did not know what direction to take; but she walked on, not caring where she went so long as she could escape pursuit.

Scarcely had she taken twenty steps when she heard a noise. Some one was moving. She stood still, breathless. Then she thought she had been mistaken. After waiting a long time she went on as before. She walked faster. The noise came again. It was close by. She stood still for many minutes.

Suddenly she bounded up, and ran as one runs for life. Her long rest had refreshed her. Despair gave her strength. But the pursuer was on her track. Swiftly, and still more swiftly, his footsteps came up behind her. He was gaining on her. Still she rushed on.

At last a strong hand seized her by the shoul-

der, and she sank down upon the moss that lay under the forest trees.

"Who are you?" cried a familiar voice.

"Vijal!" cried Beatrice.

The other let go his hold.

"Will you betray me?" cried Beatrice, in a mournful and despairing voice.

Vijal was silent.

"What do you want?" said he, at last. "Whatever you want to do I will help you. I will be your slave."

"I wish to escape."

"Come then—you shall escape," said Vijal.

Without uttering another word he walked on and Beatrice followed. Hope rose once more within her. Hope gave strength. Despair and its weakness had left her. After about half an hour's walk they reached the park wall.

"I thought it was a poacher," said Vijal, sadly; "yet I am glad it was you, for I can help you. I will help you over the wall."

He raised her up. She clambered to the top, where she rested for a moment.

"God bless you, Vijal, and good-by!" said she.

Vijal said nothing.

The next moment she was on the other side. The road lay there. It ran north away from the village. Along this road Beatrice walked swiftly.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"PICKED UP ADRIFT."

On the morning following two travelers left a small inn which lay on the road-side, about ten miles north of Brandon. It was about eight o'clock when they took their departure, driving in their own carriage at a moderate pace along the road.

"Look, Langhetti," said the one who was driving, pointing with his whip to an object in the road directly in front of them.

Langhetti raised his head, which had been bowed down in deep abstraction, to look in the direction indicated. A figure was approaching them. It looked like a woman. She walked very slowly, and appeared rather to stagger than to walk.

"She appears to be drunk, Despard," said Langhetti. "Poor wretch, and on this bleak March morning too! Let us stop and see if we can do any thing for her."

They drove on, and as they met the woman Despard stopped.

She was young and extraordinarily beautiful. Her face was thin and white. Her clothing was of fine materials but scanty and torn to shreds. As they stopped she turned her large eyes up despairingly and stood still, with a face which seemed to express every conceivable emotion of anguish and of hope. Yet as her eyes rested on Langhetti a change came over her. The deep and unutterable sadness of her face passed away, and was succeeded by a radiant flash of joy. She threw out her arms toward him with a cry of wild entreaty.

The moment that Langhetti saw her he started up and stood for an instant as if paralyzed. Her cry came to his ears. He leaped from the carriage toward her, and caught her in his arms.

"Oh, Bice! Alas, my Bicina!" he cried, and a thousand fond words came to his lips.

Beatrice looked up with eyes filled with grateful tears; her lips murmured some inaudible sentences; and then, in this full assurance of safety, the resolution that had sustained her so long gave way altogether. Her eyes closed, she gave a low moan, and sank senseless upon his breast.

Langhetti supported her for a moment, then gently laid her down to try and restore her. He chafed her hands, and did all that is usually done in such emergencies. But here the case was different—it was more than a common faint, and the animation now suspended was not to be restored by ordinary efforts.

Langhetti bowed over her as he chafed her hands. "Ah, my Bicina," he cried; "is it thus I find you! Ah, poor thin hand! Alas, white wan face! What suffering has been yours, pure angel, among those fiends of hell!"

He paused, and turned a face of agony toward Despard. But as he looked at him he saw a grief in his countenance that was only second to his own. Something in Beatrice's appearance had struck him with a deeper feeling than that merely human interest which the generous heart feels in the sufferings of others.

"Langhetti," said he, "let us not leave this sweet angel exposed to this bleak wind. We must take her back to the inn. We have gained our object. Alas! the gain is worse than a failure."

"What can we do?"

"Let us put her in the carriage between us, and drive back instantly."

Despard stooped as he spoke, raised her reverently in his arms, and lifted her upon the seat. He sprang in and put his arms around her senseless form, so as to support her against himself. Langhetti looked on with eyes that were moist with a sad yet mysterious feeling.

Then he resumed his place in the carriage.

"Oh, Langhetti!" said Despard, "what is it that I saw in the face of this poor child that so wrings my heart? What is this mystery of yours that you will not tell?"

"I can not solve it," said Langhetti, "and therefore I will not tell it."

"Tell it, whatever it is."

"No, it is only conjecture as yet, and I will not utter it."

"And it affects me?"

"Deeply."

"Therefore tell it."

"Therefore I must not tell it; for if it prove baseless I shall only excite your feeling in vain."

"At any rate let me know. For I have the wildest fancies, and I wish to know if it is possible that they are like your own."

"No, Despard," said Langhetti. "Not now. The time may come, but it has not yet."

Beatrice's head leaned against Despard's shoulder as she reclined against him, sustained by his arm. Her face was upturned; a face as white as marble, her pure Grecian features showing now their faultless lines like the sculptured face of some goddess. Her beauty was perfect in its classic outline. But her eyes were closed, and her wan, white lips parted; and there was sorrow on her face which did not seem appropriate to one so young.

"Look," said Langhetti, in a mournful voice.

"HE LEAPED I

"Saw you ever in a
fectly and so faultle
could but have seen
moods of inspiration,
ever have imagined s
"Oh, Despard!" h
in which the other h
him without a word-
me to tell you this se
wide-spread. If my
life must at once be u
turned to one dark p
you to that purpose til
the possibility of a do
"I saw that in h
which I hardly dare

"HE LEAPED FROM THE CARRIAGE TOWARD HER, AND CAUGHT HER IN HIS ARMS."

"Saw you ever in all your life any one so perfectly and so faultlessly beautiful? Oh, if you could but have seen her, as I have done, in her moods of inspiration, when she sang! Could I ever have imagined such a fate as this for her?"

"Oh, Despard!" he continued, after a pause, in which the other had turned his stern face to him without a word—"Oh, Despard! you ask me to tell you this secret. I dare not. It is so wide-spread. If my fancy be true, then all your life must at once be unsettled, and all your soul turned to one dark purpose. Never will I turn you to that purpose till I know the truth beyond the possibility of a doubt."

"I saw that in her face," said Despard, "which I hardly dare acknowledge to myself."

"Do not acknowledge it, then, I implore you. Forget it. Do not open up once more that old and now almost forgotten sorrow. Think not of it even to yourself."

Langhetti spoke with a wild and vehement urgency which was wonderful.

"Do you not see," said Despard, "that you rouse my curiosity to an intolerable degree?"

"Be it so; at any rate it is better to suffer from curiosity than to feel what you must feel if I told you what I suspect."

Had it been any other man than Langhetti Despard would have been offended. As it was he said nothing, but began to conjecture as to the best course for them to follow.

"It is evident," said he to Langhetti, "that

she has escaped from Brandon Hall during the past night. She will, no doubt, be pursued. What shall we do? If we go back to this inn they will wonder at our bringing her. There is another inn a mile further on."

"I have been thinking of that," replied Langhetti. "It will be better to go to the other inn. But what shall we say about her? Let us say she is an invalid going home."

"And am I her medical attendant?" asked Despard.

"No; that is not necessary. You are her guardian—the Rector of Holby, of course—your name is sufficient guarantee."

"Oh," said Despard, after a pause, "I'll tell you something better yet. I am her brother and she is my sister—Miss Despard."

As he spoke, he looked down upon her marble face. He did not see Langhetti's countenance. Had he done so he would have wondered. For Langhetti's eyes seemed to seek to pierce the very soul of Despard. His face became transformed. Its usual serenity vanished, and there was eager wonder, intense and anxious curiosity—an endeavor to see if there was not some deep meaning underlying Despard's words. But Despard showed no emotion. He was conscious of no deep meaning. He merely murmured to himself as he looked down upon the unconscious face:

"My sick sister—my sister Beatrice."

Langhetti said not a word, but sat in silence, absorbed in one intense and wondering gaze. Despard seemed to dwell upon this idea, fondly and tenderly.

"She is not one of that brood," said he, after a pause. "It is in name only that she belongs to them."

"They are fiends and she is an angel," said Langhetti.

"Heaven has sent her to us; we must preserve her forever."

"If she lives," said Langhetti, "she must never go back."

"Go back!" cried Despard. "Better far for her to die."

"I myself would die rather than give her up."

"And I, too. But we will not. I will adopt her. Yes, she shall cast away the link that binds her to these accursed ones—her vile name. I will adopt her. She shall have my name—she shall be my sister. She shall be Beatrice Despard.

"And surely," continued Despard, looking tenderly down, "surely, of all the Despard race there was never one so beautiful and so pure as she."

Langhetti did not say a word, but looked at Despard and the one whom he thus called his adopted sister with an emotion which he could not control. Tears started to his eyes; yet over his brow there came something which is not generally associated with tears—a lofty, exultant expression, an air of joy and peace.

"Your sister," said Despard, "shall nurse her back to health. She will do so for your sake, Langhetti—or rather from her own noble and generous instincts. In Thornton Grange she will, perhaps, find some alleviation for the sorrows which she may have endured. Our care shall be around her, and we can all labor together for her future welfare."

They at length reached the inn of which they had spoken, and Beatrice was tenderly lifted out and carried up stairs. She was mentioned as the sister of the Rev. Mr. Despard, of Holby, who was bringing her back from the sea-side, whither she had gone for her health. Unfortunately, she had been too weak for the journey.

The people of the inn showed the kindest attention and warmest sympathy. A doctor was sent for, who lived at a village two miles farther on.

Beatrice recovered from her faint, but remained unconscious. The doctor considered that her brain was affected. He shook his head solemnly over it, as doctors always do when they have nothing in particular to say. Both Langhetti and Despard knew more about her case than he did.

They saw that rest was the one thing needed. But rest could be better attained in Holby than here; and besides, there was the danger of pursuit. It was necessary to remove her; and that, too, without delay. A close carriage was procured without much difficulty, and the patient was deposited therein.

A slow journey brought them by easy stages to Holby. Beatrice remained unconscious. A nurse was procured, who traveled with her. The condition of Beatrice was the same which she described in her diary. Great grief and extraordinary suffering and excitement had overtasked the brain, and it had given way. So Despard and Langhetti conjectured.

At last they reached Holby. They drove at once to Thornton Grange.

"What is this?" cried Mrs. Thornton, who had heard nothing from them, and ran out upon the piazza to meet them as she saw them coming.

"I have found Bice," said Langhetti, "and have brought her here."

"Where is she?"

"There," said Langhetti. "I give her to your care—it is for you to give her back to me."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

ON THE TRACK.

BEATRICE'S disappearance was known at Brandon Hall on the following day. The servants first made the discovery. They found her absent from her room, and no one had seen her about the house. It was an unusual thing for her to be out of the house early in the day, and of late for many months she had scarcely ever left her room, so that now her absence at once excited suspicion. The news was communicated from one to another among the servants. Afraid of Potts, they did not dare to tell him, but first sought to find her by themselves. They called Mrs. Compton, and the fear which perpetually possessed the mind of this poor, timid creature now rose to a positive frenzy of anxiety and dread. She told all that she knew, and that was that she had seen her the evening before as usual, and had left her at ten o'clock.

No satisfaction therefore could be gained from her. The servants tried to find traces of her, but were unable. At length toward evening, on Potts's return from the bank, the news was communicated to him.

The rage of Potts need not be described here. That one who had twice defied should now escape him filled him with fury. He organized all his servants into bands, and they scoured the grounds till darkness put an end to these operations.

That evening Potts and his two companions dined in moody silence, only conversing by fits and starts.

"I don't think she's killed herself," said Potts, in reply to an observation of Clark. "She's got stuff enough in her to do it, but I don't believe she has. She's playing a deeper game. I only wish we could fish up her dead body out of some pond; it would quiet matters down very considerable."

"If she's got off she's taken with her some secrets that won't do us any good," remarked John.

"The devil of it is," said Potts, "we don't know how much she does know. She must know a precious lot, or she never would have dared to say what she did."

"But how could she get out of the park?" said Clark. "That wall is too high to climb over, and the gates are all locked."

"It's my opinion," exclaimed John, "that she's in the grounds yet."

Potts shook his head.

"After what she told me it's my belief she can do any thing. Why, didn't she tell us of crimes that were committed before she was born? I begin to feel shaky, and it is the girl that has made me so."

Potts rose to his feet, plunged his hands deep into his pockets, and walked up and down. The others sat in gloomy silence.

"Could that Hong Kong nurse of hers have told her any thing?" asked John.

"She didn't know any thing to tell."

"Mrs. Compton must have blown, then."

"Mrs. Compton didn't know. I tell you that there is not one human being living that knows what she told us besides ourselves and her. How the devil she picked it up I don't know."

"I didn't like the cut of her from the first," said John. "She had a way of looking that made me feel uneasy, as though there was something in her that would some day be dangerous. I didn't want you to send for her."

"Well, the mischief's done now."

"You're not going to give up the search, are you?" asked Clark.

"Give it up! Not I."

"We must get her back."

"Yes; our only safety now is in catching her again at all hazards."

There was a long silence.

"Twenty years ago," said Potts, moodily, "the *Vishnu* drifted away, and since the time of the trial no one has mentioned it to me till that girl did."

"And she is only twenty years old," rejoined John.

"I tell you, lads, you've got the devil to do with when you tackle her," remarked Clark; "but if she is the devil we must fight it out and crush her."

"Twenty-three years," continued Potts, in the same gloomy tone—"twenty-three years have passed since I was captured with my followers. No one has mentioned that since. No one in all the world knows that I am the only Englishman that ever joined the Thugs except that girl."

"She must know every thing that we have done," said Clark.

"Of course she must."

"Including our Brandon enterprise," said John.

"And including your penmanship," said Clark; "enough, lad, to stretch a neck."

"Come," said Potts, "don't let *us* talk of this, any how."

Again they relapsed into silence.

"Well!" exclaimed John, at last, "what are you going to do to-morrow?"

"Chase her till I find her," replied Potts, savagely.

"But where?"

"I've been thinking of a plan which seems to me to be about the thing."

"What?"

"A good old plan," said Potts. "Your pup, Johnnie, can help us."

John pounded his fist on the table with savage exultation.

"My blood-hound! Good, old Dad, what a trump you are to think of that!"

"He'll do it!"

"Yes," said John, "if he gets on her track and comes up with her I'm a little afraid that we'll arrive at the spot just too late to save her. It's the best way that I know of for getting rid of the difficulty handsomely. Of course we are going after her through anxiety, and the dog is an innocent pup who comes with us; and if any disaster happens we will kill him on the spot."

Potts shook his head moodily. He had no very hopeful feeling about this. He was shaken to the soul at the thought of this stern, relentless girl carrying out into the world his terrific secret.

Early on the following morning they resumed their search after the lost girl. This time the servants were not employed, but the three themselves went forth to try what they could do. With them was the "pup" to which allusion had been made on the previous evening. This animal was a huge blood-hound, which John had purchased to take the place of his bull-dog, and of which he was extravagantly proud. True to his instinct, the hound understood from smelling an article of Beatrice's apparel what it was that he was required to seek, and he went off on her trail out through the front door, down the steps, and up to the grove.

The others followed after. The dog led them down the path toward the gate, and thence into the thick grove and through the underbrush. Scraps of her dress still clung in places to the brushwood. The dog led them round and round wherever Beatrice had wandered in her flight from Vital. They all believed that they would certainly find her here, and that she had lost her way or at least tried to conceal herself. But at last, to their disappointment, the dog turned away out of the wood and into the path again. Then he led them along through the woods until he reached the Park wall. Here the animal squatted on his haunches, and, lifting up his head, gave a long deep howl.

"What's this?" said Potts.

"Why, don't you see? She's got over the wall somehow. All that we've got to do is to put the dog over, and follow on."

"WHY, DON'T YOU SEE? SHE'S GOT OVER THE WALL SOMEHOW."

The others at once understood that this must be the case. In a short time they were on the other side of the wall, where the dog found the trail again, and led on while they followed as before.

They did not, however, wish to seem like pursuers. That would hardly be the thing in a country of law and order. They chose to walk rather slowly, and John held the dog by a strap which he had brought with him. They soon found the walk much longer than they had anticipated, and began to regret that they had not come in a carriage. They had gone too far, however, to remedy this now, so they resolved to continue on their way as they were.

"Gad!" said John, who felt fatigued first, "what a walker she is!"

"She's the devil!" growled Clark, savagely.

At last, after about three hours' walk, the dog stopped at a place by the road-side, and snuffed in all directions. The others watched him anxiously for a long time. The dog ran all around sniffing at the ground, but to no purpose.

He had lost the trail. Again and again he tried to recover it. But his blood-thirsty instinct was completely at fault. The trail had gone, and at last the animal came up to his master and crouched down at his feet with a low moan.

"Sold!" cried John, with a curse.

"What can have become of her?" said Potts.

"I don't know," said John. "I dare say she's got took up in some wagon. Yes, that's it. That's the reason why the trail has gone."

"What shall we do now? We can't follow. It may have been the coach, and she may have got a lift to the nearest railway station."

"Well," said John, "I'll tell you what we can do. Let one of us go to the inns that are nearest, and ask if there was a girl in the coach that looked like her, or make any inquiries that may be needed. We could find out that much at any rate."

The others assented. John swore he was too tired. At length, after some conversation, they all determined to go on, and to hire a carriage back. Accordingly on they went, and soon reached an inn.

Here they made inquiries, but could learn nothing whatever about any girl that had stopped there. Potts then hired a carriage and drove off to the next inn, leaving the others behind. He returned in about two hours. His face bore an expression of deep perplexity.

"Well, what luck, dad?" asked John.

"There's the devil to pay," growled Potts.

"Did you find her?"

"There is a girl at the next inn, and it's her. Now what name do you think they call her by?"

"What?"

"Miss Despard."

Clark turned pale and looked at John, who gave a long, low whistle.

"Is she alone?" asked John.

"No—that's the worst of it. A reverend gent is with her, who has charge of her, and says he is her brother."

"Who?"

"His name is Courtenay Despard, son of Colonel Lionel Despard," said Potts.

The others returned his look in utter bewilderment.

"I've been thinking and thinking," said Potts, "but I haven't got to the bottom of it yet. We can't do any thing just now, that's evident. I found out that this reverend gent is on his way to Holby, where he is rector. The only thing left for us to do is to go quietly home and look about us."

"It seems to me that this is like the beginning of one of those monsoon storms," said Clark, gloomily.

The others said nothing. In a short time they were on their way back, moody and silent.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BEATRICE'S RECOVERY.

It was not easy for the overtasked and overworn powers of Beatrice to rally. Weeks passed before she opened her eyes to a recognition of the world around her. It was March when she sank down by the road-side. It was June when she began to recover from the shock of the terrible excitement through which she had passed.

Loving hearts sympathized with her, tender hands cared for her, vigilant eyes watched her, and all that love and care could do were unremittingly exerted for her benefit.

As Beatrice opened her eyes after her long unconsciousness she looked around in wonder, recognizing nothing. Then they rested in equal wonder upon one who stood by her bedside.

She was slender and fragile in form, with delicate features, whose fine lines seemed rather like ideal beauty than real life. The eyes were large, dark, lustrous, and filled with a wonderful but mournful beauty. Yet all the features, so exquisite in their loveliness, were transcended by the expression that dwelt upon them. It was pure, it was spiritual, it was holy. It was the face of a saint, such a face as appears to the rapt devotee when fasting has done its work, and the quickened imagination grasps at ideal forms till the dwellers in heaven seem to become visible.

In her confused mind Beatrice at first had a faint fancy that she was in another state of existence, and that the form before her was one of those pure intelligences who had been appointed to welcome her there. Perhaps there was some such thought visible upon her face, for the stranger came up to her noiselessly, and stooping down, kissed her.

"You are among friends," said she, in a low, sweet voice. "You have been sick long."

"Where am I?"

"Among loving friends," said the other, "far away from the place where you suffered."

Beatrice sighed.

"I hoped that I had passed away forever," she murmured.

"Not yet, not yet," said the stranger, in a voice of tender yet mournful sweetness, which had in it an unfathomable depth of meaning. "We must wait on here, dear friend, till it be His will to call us."

"And who are you?" asked Beatrice, after a long and anxious look at the face of the speaker.

"My name is Edith Brandon," said the other, gently.

"Brandon!—Edith Brandon!" cried Beatrice, with a vehemence which contrasted strangely with the scarce-audible words with which she had just spoken.

The stranger smiled with the same melancholy sweetness which she had shown before.

"Yes," said she; "but do not agitate yourself, dearest."

"And have you nursed me?"

"Partly. But you are in the house of one who is like an angel in her loving care of you."

"But you—you?" persisted Beatrice, "you did not perish, then, as they said?"

"No," replied the stranger; "it was not permitted me."

"Thank God!" murmured Beatrice, fervently. "*He* has one sorrow less. Did *he* save you?"

"He," said Edith, "of whom you speak does not know that I am alive, nor do I know where he is. Yet some day we will perhaps meet. And now you must not speak. You will agitate yourself too much. Here you have those who love you. For the one who brought you here is one who would lay down his life for yours, dearest—he is Paolo Langhetti."

"Langhetti!" said Beatrice. "Oh, God be thanked!"

"And she who has taken you to her heart and home is his sister."

"His sister Teresa, of whom he used to speak so lovingly? Ah! God is kinder to me than I feared. Ah, me! it is as though I had died and have awaked in heaven."

"But now I will speak no more, and you must speak no more, for you will only increase your agitation. Rest, and another time you can ask what you please."

Edith turned away and walked to one of the windows, where she looked out pensively upon the sea.

From this time Beatrice began to recover rapidly. Langhetti's sister seemed to her almost like an old friend since she had been associated with some of her most pleasant memories. An atmosphere of love was around her: the poor sufferer inhaled the pure and life-giving air, and strength came with every breath.

At length she was able to sit up, and then Langhetti saw her. He greeted her with all the ardent and impassioned warmth which was so striking a characteristic of his impulsive and affectionate nature. Then she saw Despard.

There was something about this man which filled her with indefinable emotions. The knowledge which she had of the mysterious fate of his father did not repel her from him. A wonderful and subtle sympathy seemed at once to arise between the two. The stern face of Despard re-

"AS BEATRICE OPENED HER EYES AFTER HER LONG UNCONSCIOUSNESS, SHE LOOKED AROUND IN WONDER."

...ed a softer and more genial expression when ...saw her. His tone was gentle and affectionate, almost paternal.

What was the feeling that arose within her heart toward this man? With the one for her father who had inflicted on his father so terrible a fate, how did she dare to look him in the face or exchange words with him? Should she not rather shrink away as once she shrank from Brandon?

Yet she did not shrink. His presence brought a strange peace and calm over her soul. His influence was more potent over her than that of Langhetti. In this strange company he seemed to her to be the centre and the chief.

To Beatrice Edith was an impenetrable mystery. Her whole manner excited her deepest reverence and at the same time her strongest curiosity. The fact that she was *his* sister would of itself have won her heart; but there were other things about her which affected her strangely.

Edith moved among the others with a strange, far-off air, an air at once full of gentle affection, yet preoccupied. Her manner indicated love, yet the love of one who was far above them. She was like some grown person associating with young children whom he loved. "Her soul was like a star and dwelt apart."

Paolo seemed more like an equal; but Paolo himself approached equality only because he could

understand her best. He alone could enter into communion with her. Beatrice noticed a profound and unalterable reverence in his manner toward Edith, which was like that which a son might pay a mother, yet more delicate and more chivalrous. All this, however, was beyond her comprehension.

She once questioned Mrs. Thornton, but received no satisfaction. Mrs. Thornton looked mysterious, but shook her head.

"Your brother treats her like a divinity."

"I suppose he thinks she is something more than mortal."

"Do you have that awe of her which I feel?"

"Yes; and so does every one. I feel toward her as though she belonged to another world. She takes no interest in this."

"She nursed me."

"Oh yes! Every act of love or kindness which she can perform she seeks out and does, but now as you grow better she falls back upon herself."

Surrounded by such friends as these Beatrice rapidly regained her strength. Weeks went on, and at length she began to move about, to take long rides and drives, and to stroll through the Park.

During these weeks Paolo made known to her his plans. She embraced them eagerly.

"You have a mission," said he. "It was not for nothing that your divine voice was given to you. I have written my opera under the most extraordinary circumstances. You know what it is. Never have I been able to decide how it should be represented. I have prayed for a Voice. At my time of need you were thrown in my way. My Bice, God has sent you. Let us labor together."

Beatrice grasped eagerly at this idea. To be a singer, to interpret the thoughts of Langhetti, seemed delightful to her. She would then be dependent on no friend. She would be her own mistress. She would not be forced to lead a life of idleness, with her heart preying upon itself. Music would come to her aid. It would be at once the purpose, the employment, and the delight of her life. If there was one thing to her which could alleviate sorrow and grief it was the exultant joy which was created within her by the Divine Art—that Art which alone is common to earth and heaven. And for Beatrice there was this joy, that she had one of those natures which was so sensitive to music that under its power heaven itself appeared to open before her.

All these were lovers of music, and therefore had delights to which common mortals are strangers. To the soul which is endowed with the capacity for understanding the delights of tone there are joys peculiar, at once pure and enduring, which nothing else that this world gives can equal.

Langhetti was the high-priest of this charmed circle. Edith was the presiding or inspiring divinity. Beatrice was the medium of utterance—the Voice that brought down heaven to earth.

Mrs. Thornton and Despard stood apart, the recipients of the sublime effects and holy emotions which the others wrought out within them.

Edith was like the soul.

Langhetti like the mind.

Beatrice resembled the material element by which the spiritual is communicated to man. Hers was the Voice which spoke.

Langhetti thought that they as a trio of powers formed a means of communicating new revelations to man. It was natural indeed that he in his high and generous enthusiasm should have some such thoughts as these, and should look forward with delight to the time when his work should first be performed. Edith, who lived and moved in an atmosphere beyond human feeling, was above the level of his enthusiasm; but Beatrice caught it all, and in her own generous and susceptible nature this purpose of Langhetti produced the most powerful effects.

In the church where Mrs. Thornton and Despard had so often met there was now a new performance. Here Langhetti played, Beatrice sang, Edith smiled as she heard the expression of heavenly ideas, and Despard and Mrs. Thornton found themselves borne away from all common thoughts by the power of that sublime rehearsal.

As time passed and Beatrice grew stronger Langhetti became more impatient about his opera. The voice of Beatrice, always marvelous, had not suffered during her sickness. Nay, if any thing, it had grown better; her soul had gained new susceptibilities since Langhetti last saw her, and since she could understand more and feel more, her expression itself had become more subtle and refined. So that Voice which Langhetti had always called divine had put forth new powers, and he, if he believed himself the High-Priest and Beatrice the Pythian, saw that her inspiration had grown more delicate and more profound.

"We will not set up a new Delphi," said he. "Our revelations are not new. We but give fresh and extraordinary emphasis to old and eternal truths."

In preparing for the great work before them it was necessary to get a name for Beatrice. Her own name was doubly abhorrent—first, from her own life long hate of it, which later circumstances had intensified; and, secondly, from the damning effect which such a name would have on the fortune of any *artiste*. Langhetti wished her to take his name, but Despard showed an extraordinary pertinacity on this point.

"No," said he, "I am personally concerned in this. I adopted her. She is my sister. Her name is Despard. If she takes any other name I shall consider it as an intolerable slight."

He expressed himself so strongly that Beatrice could not refuse. Formerly she would have considered that it was infamous for her to take that noble name; but now this idea had become weak, and it was with a strange exultation that she yielded to the solicitations of Despard.

Langhetti himself yielded at once. His face bore an expression of delight which seemed inexplicable to Beatrice. She asked him why he felt such pleasure. Was not an Italian name better for a singer? Despard was an English name, and, though aristocratic, was not one which a great singer might have.

"I am thinking of other things, my Bicina," said Langhetti, who had never given up his old, fond, fraternal manner toward her. "It has no connection with art. I do not consider the mere effect of the name for one moment."

"What is it, then, that you do consider?"

"Other things."

"What other things?"

"Not connected with Art," continued Langhetti, evasively. "I will tell you some day when the time comes."

"Now you are exciting my curiosity," said Beatrice, in a low and earnest tone. "You do not know what thoughts you excite within me. Either you ought not to excite such ideas, or if you do, it is your duty to satisfy them."

"It is not time yet."

"What do you mean by that?"

"That is a secret."

"Of course; you make it one; but if it is one connected with me, then surely I ought to know."

"It is not time yet for you to know."

"When will it be time?"

"I can not tell."

"And you will therefore keep it a secret forever?"

"I hope, my Bicina, that the time will come before long."

"Yet why do you wait, if you know or even suspect any thing in which I am concerned?"

"I wish to spare you."

"That is not necessary. Am I so weak that I can not bear to hear any thing which you may have to tell? You forget what a life I have had for two years. Such a life might well prepare me for any thing."

"If it were merely something which might create sorrow I would tell it. I believe that you have a self-reliant nature, which has grown stronger through affliction. But that which I have to tell is different. It is of such a character that it would of necessity destroy any peace of mind which you have, and fill you with hopes and feelings that could never be satisfied."

"Yet even that I could bear. Do you not see that by your very vagueness you are exciting my thoughts and hopes? You do not know what I know."

"What do you know?" asked Langhetti, eagerly.

Beatrice hesitated. No; she could not tell. That would be to tell all the holiest secrets of her heart. For she must then tell about Brandon, and the African island, and the manuscript which he carried and which had been taken from his bosom. Of this she dared not speak.

She was silent.

"You can not *know* any thing," said Langhetti. "You may suspect much. I only have suspicions. Yet it would not be wise to communicate these to you, since they would prove idle and without result."

So the conversation ended, and Langhetti still maintained his secret, though Beatrice hoped to find it out.

At length she was sufficiently recovered to be able to begin the work to which Langhetti wished to lead her. It was August, and Langhetti was impatient to be gone. So when August began he made preparations to depart, and in a few days they were in London. Edith was left with Mrs. Thornton. Beatrice had an attendant who went with her, half chaperon half lady's maid.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE AFFAIRS OF SMITHERS & CO.

For more than a year the vast operations of Smithers & Co. had astonished business circles in London. Formerly they had been considered as an eminently respectable house, and as doing a safe business; but of late all this had been changed in so sudden and wonderful a manner that no one could account for it. Leaving aside their old, cautious policy, they undertook without hesitation the largest enterprises. Foreign railroads, national loans, vast joint-stock companies—these were the things that now occupied Smithers & Co. The Barings themselves were outrivaled, and Smithers & Co. reached the acme of their sudden glory on one occasion, when they took the new Spanish loan out of the grasp of even the Rothschilds themselves.

How to account for it became the problem. For, allowing the largest possible success in their former business to Smithers & Co., that business had never been of sufficient dimensions to allow of this. Some said that a rich Indian had become a sleeping partner, others declared that the real Smithers was no more to be seen, and that the business was managed by strangers who had bought them out and retained their name. Others again said that Smithers & Co. had made large amounts in California mining speculations. At length the general belief was, that some individuals who had made millions of money in California had bought out Smithers & Co., and were now doing business under their name.

As to their soundness there was no question. Their operations were such as demanded, first of all, ready money in unlimited quantities. This they were always able to command. Between them and the Bank of England there seemed to be the most perfect understanding and the most enviable confidence. The Rothschilds spoke of them with infinite respect. People began to look upon them as the leading house in Europe. The sudden apparition of this tremendous power in the commercial world threw that world into a state of consternation which finally ended in wondering awe.

But Smithers & Co. continued calmly, yet successfully, their great enterprises. The Russian loan of fifteen millions was negotiated by them. They took twenty millions of the French loan, five millions of the Austrian, and two and a half of the Turkish. They took nearly all the stock of the Lyons and Marseilles Railroad. They owned a large portion of the stock of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company. They had ten millions of East India stock. California alone, which was now dazzling the world, could account to the common mind for such enormous wealth.

The strangest thing was that Smithers himself was never seen. The business was done by his subordinates. There was a young man who represented the house in public, and who called himself Henderson. He was a person of distinguished aspect, yet of reserved and somewhat melancholy manner. No one pretended to be in his confidence. No one pretended to know whether he was clerk or partner. As he was the only representative of Smithers & Co., he was treated with marked respect wherever he appeared.

The young man, whether partner or clerk, had evidently the supreme control of affairs. He swayed in his own hands the thunder-bolts of this Olympian power. Nothing daunted him. The grandeur of his enterprises dazzled the public mind. His calm antagonism to the great houses of London filled them with surprise. A new power had seized a high place in the commercial world, and the old gods—the Rothschilds, the Barings, and others—looked aghast. At first they tried to despise this interloper; at length they found him at least as strong as themselves, and began to fancy that he might be stronger. A few experiments soon taught them that there was no weakness there. On one occasion the Rothschilds, true to their ordinary selfish policy, made a desperate attempt to crush the new house which dared to enter into rivalry with them. Wide-spread plans were arranged in such a way that large demands were made upon them on one day. The amount was nearly two millions. Smithers & Co. showed not the smallest hesitation. Henderson, their representative, did not even take the trouble to confer with the Bank of England. He sent his orders to the Bank. The money was furnished. It was the Directors of the Bank of England who looked aghast at this struggle between Rothschild and Smithers & Co. The gold in the Bank vaults sank low, and the next day the rates of discount were raised. All London felt the result of that struggle.

Smithers & Co. waited for a few months, and then suddenly retorted with terrific force. The obligations of the Rothschilds were obtained from all quarters—some which were due were held over and not presented till the appointed day. Obligations in many forms—in all the forms of indebtedness that may arise in a vast business—all these had been collected from various quarters with untiring industry and extraordinary outlay of care and money. At last in one day they were all poured upon the Rothschilds. Nearly four millions of money were required to meet that demand.

The great house of Rothschild reeled under the blow. Smithers & Co. were the ones who administered it. James Rothschild had a private interview with the Directors of the Bank of England. There was a sudden and enormous sale of securities that day on 'Change. In selling out such large amounts the loss was enormous. It was difficult to find purchasers, but Smithers & Co. stepped forward and bought nearly all that was offered. The Rothschilds saved themselves, of course, but at a terrible loss, which became the profits of Smithers & Co.

The Rothschilds retreated from the conflict utterly routed, and glad to escape disaster of a worse kind. Smithers & Co. came forth victorious. They had beaten the Rothschilds at their own game, and had made at least half a million. All London rang with the story. It was a bitter humiliation for that proud Jewish house which for years had never met with a rival. Yet there was no help, nor was there the slightest chance of revenge. They were forced to swallow the result as best they could, and to try to regain what they had lost.

Over this the pale and melancholy face of Henderson excited a deeper interest. This was the man who had beaten the Rothschilds—the strongest capitalist in the world. In his financial operations he continued as calm, as grave, and as immovable as ever. He would risk millions without moving a muscle of his countenance. Yet so sagacious was he, so wide-spread were his agencies, so accurate was his secret information, that his plans scarcely ever failed. His capital was so vast that it often gave him control of the market. Coming into the field untrammeled as the older houses were, he had a larger control of money than any of them, and far greater freedom of action.

After a time the Rothschilds, the Barings, and other great bankers, began to learn that Smithers & Co. had vast funds every where, in all the capitals of Europe, and in America. Even in the West Indies their operations were extensive. Their old Australian agency was enlarged, and a new banking-house founded by them in Calcutta began to act on the same vast scale as the leading house at London. Smithers & Co. also continued to carry on a policy which was hostile to those older bankers. The Rothschilds in particular felt this, and were in perpetual dread of a renewal of that tremendous assault under which they had once nearly gone down. They became timid, and were compelled to arrange their business so as to guard against this possibility. This, of course, checked their operations, and widened and enlarged the field of action for their rivals.

No one knew any thing whatever about Henderson. None of the clerks could tell any thing concerning him. They were all new hands. None of them had ever seen Smithers. They all believed that Henderson was the junior partner, and that the senior spent his time abroad. From this it began to be believed that Smithers staid in California digging gold, which he diligently remitted to the London house.

At length the clerks began to speak mysteriously of a man who came from time to time to the office, and whose whole manner showed him to possess authority there. The treatment which he received from Henderson—at once cordial and affectionate—showed them to be most intimate and friendly; and from words which were dropped they all thought him to be the senior partner. Yet he appeared to be very little older than Henderson, if as old, and no one even knew his name. If any thing could add to the interest with which the house of Smithers & Co. was regarded it was this impenetrable mystery, which baffled not merely outsiders but even the clerks themselves.

Shortly after the departure of Langhetti and Beatrice from Holby two men were seated in the inner parlor of the office of Smithers & Co. One was the man known as Henderson, the other the mysterious senior partner.

They had just come in and letters were lying on the table.

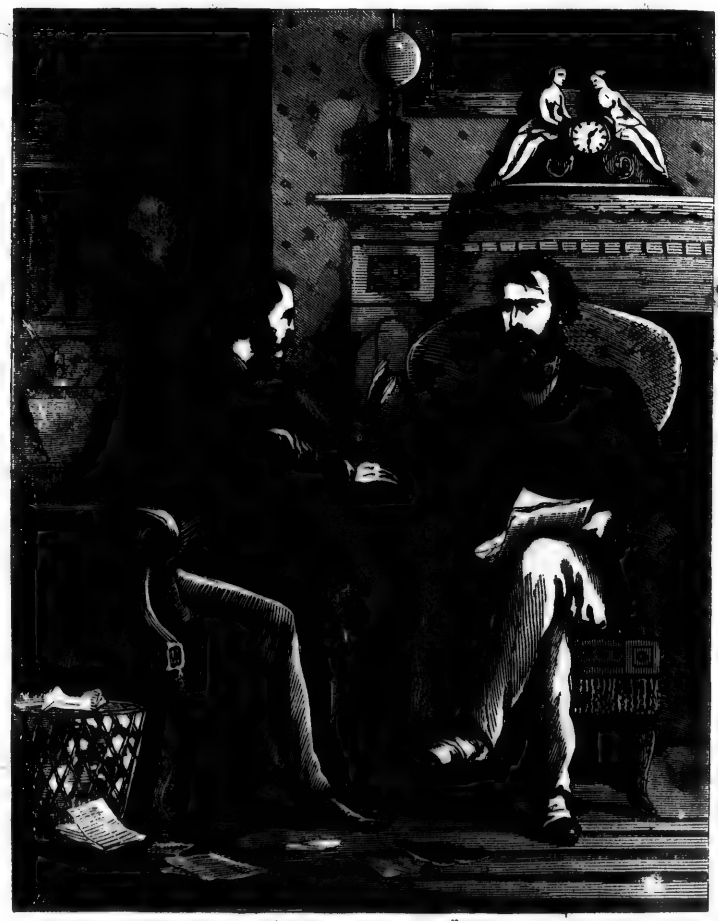
"You've got a large number this morning, Frank?" said the senior partner.

"Yes," said Frank, turning them over; "and here, Louis, is one for you." He took out a letter from the pile and handed it to Louis. "It's from your Brandon Hall correspondent," he added.

Louis sat down and opened it. The letter was as follows:

"*August* 15, 1849.

"DEAR SIR,—I have had nothing in particular to write since the flight of Miss Potts, except to tell you what they were doing. I have already



"LANGHETTI IS ALIVE."

informed you that they kept three spies at Holby to watch her. One of these returned, as I told you in my last letter, with the information that she had gone to London with a party named Langhetti. Ever since then *they* have been talking it over, and have come to the conclusion to get a detective, and keep him busy watching her with the idea of getting her back, I think. I hope to God they will not get her back. If you take any interest in her, Sir, as you appear to do, I hope you will use your powerful arm to save her. It will be terrible if she has to come back here. She will die, I know. Hoping soon to have something more to communicate,

"I remain, yours respectfully,

"E. L.

"Mr. Smithers, Sen., London."

Louis read this letter over several times and fell into deep thought.

Frank went on reading his letters, looking up from time to time. At last he put down the last one.

"Louis!" said he.

Louis looked up.

"You came so late last night that I haven't had a chance to speak about any thing yet. I want to tell you something very important."

"Well!"

"Langhetti is alive."

"I know it."

"You knew it! When? Why did you not tell me?"

"I didn't want to tell any thing that might distract you from your purpose."

"I am not a child, Louis! After my victory over Rothschild I ought to be worthy of your confidence."

"That's not the point, Frank," said Louis; "but I know your affection for the man, and I thought you would give up all to find him."

"Well!"

"Well. I thought it would be better to let nothing interpose now between us and our purpose. No," he continued, with a stern tone, "no, no one however dear, however loved, and therefore I said nothing about Langhetti. I thought that your generous heart would only be distressed. You would feel like giving up every thing to find him out and see him, and, therefore, I did not wish you even to know it. Yet I have kept an account of his movements, and know where he is now."

"He is here in London," said Frank, with deep emotion.

"Yes, thank God!" said Louis. "You will see him, and we all will be able to meet some day."

"But," asked Frank, "do you not think Langhetti is a man to be trusted?"

"That is not the point," replied Louis. "I believe Langhetti is one of the noblest men that ever lived. It must be so from what I have heard. All my life I will cherish his name and try to assist him in every possible way. I believe also that if we requested it he might perhaps keep our secret. But that is not the point, Frank. This is the way I look at it: We are dead. Our deaths have been recorded. Louis Brandon and Frank Brandon have perished. I am Wheeler, or Smithers, or Forsyth, or any body else; you are Henderson. We keep our secret because we have a purpose before us. Our father calls us from his tomb to its accomplishment. Our mother summons us. Our sweet sister Edith, from her grave of horror unutterable, calls us. All personal feeling must stand aside, Frank—yours and mine—whatever they be, till we have done our duty."

"You are right, Louis," said Frank, sternly.

"Langhetti is in London," continued Louis. "You will not see him, but you can show your gratitude, and so can I. He is going to hire an opera-house to bring out an opera; I saw that in the papers. It is a thing full of risk, but he perhaps does not think of that. Let us enable him to gain the desire of his heart. Let us fill the house for him. You can send your agents to furnish tickets to people who may make the audience; or you can send around those who can praise him sufficiently. I don't know what his opera may be worth. I know, however, from what I have learned, that he has musical genius; and I think if we give him a good start he will succeed. That is the way to show your gratitude, Frank."

"I'll arrange all that!" said Frank. "The house shall be crowded. I'll send an agent to him—I can easily find out where he is, I suppose—and make him an offer of Covent Garden theatre on his own terms. Yes, Langhetti shall have a fair chance. I'll arrange a plan to enforce success."

"Do so, and you will keep him permanently in London till the time comes when we can arise from the dead."

They were silent for a long time. Louis had thoughts of his own, excited by the letter which he had received, and these thoughts he did not care to utter. One thing was a secret even from Frank.

And what could he do? That Beatrice had fallen among friends he well knew. He had found this out when, after receiving a letter from Phillips about her flight, he had hurried there and learned the result. Then he had himself gone to Holby, and found that she was at Mrs. Thornton's. He had watched till she had recovered. He had seen her as she took a drive in Thornton's carriage. He had left an agent there to write him about her when he left.

What was he to do now? He read the letter over again. He paused at that sentence: "They have been talking it over, and have come to the conclusion to get a detective, and keep him busy watching her with the idea of getting her back."

What was the nature of this danger? Beatrice was of age. She was with Langhetti. She was her own mistress. Could there be any danger of her being taken back against her will? The villains at Brandon Hall were sufficiently unscrupulous, but would they dare to commit any violence? and if they did, would not Langhetti's protection save her?

Such were his thoughts. Yet, on the other hand, he considered the fact that she was inexperienced, and might have peculiar ideas about a father's authority. If Potts came himself, demanding her return, perhaps, out of a mistaken sense of filial duty, she might go with him. Or, even if she was unwilling to do so, she might yield to coercion, and not feel justified in resisting. The possibility of this filled him with horror. The idea of her being taken back to live under the power of those miscreants from whom she had escaped was intolerable. Yet he knew not what to do.

Between him and her there was a gulf unfathomable, impassable. She was one of that accursed brood which he was seeking to exterminate. He would spare her if possible; he would gladly lay down his life to save her from one moment's misery; but if she stood in the way of his vengeance, could he—dared he stay that vengeance? For that he would sacrifice life itself! Would he refuse to sacrifice even *her* if she were more dear than life itself?

Yet here was a case in which she was no longer connected with, but striving to sever herself from them. She was flying from that accursed father of hers. Would he stand idly by, and see her in danger? That were impossible. All along, ever since his return to England, he had watched over her, unseen himself and unsuspected by her, and had followed her footsteps when she fled. To desert her now was impossible. The only question with him was—how to watch her or guard her.

One thing gave him comfort, and that was the guardianship of Langhetti. This he thought was sufficient to insure her safety. For surely Langhetti would know the character of her enemies as well as Beatrice herself, and so guard her as to insure her safety from any attempt of theirs. He therefore placed his chief reliance on Langhetti, and determined merely to secure some one who would watch over her, and let him know from day to day how she fared. Had he thought it necessary he would have sent a band of men to watch and guard her by day and night; but this

idea never entered his mind for the simple reason that he did not think the danger was pressing. England was after all a country of law, and even a father could not carry off his daughter against her will when she was of age. So he comforted himself.

"Well," said he, at last, rousing himself from his abstraction, "how is Potts now?"

"Deeper than ever," answered Frank, quietly.

"The Brandon Bank—"

"The Brandon Bank has been going at a rate that would have foundered any other concern long ago. There's not a man that I sent there who has not been welcomed and obtained all that he wanted. Most of the money that they advanced has been to men that I sent. They drew on us for the money and sent us various securities of their own, holding the securities of these applicants. It is simply bewildering to think how easily that scoundrel fell into the snare."

"When a man has made a fortune easily he gets rid of it easily," said Louis, laconically.

"Potts thinks that all his applicants are leading men of the county. I take good care that they go there as baronets at least. Some are lords. He is overpowered in the presence of these lords, and gives them what they ask on their own terms. In his letters he has made some attempts at an expression of gratitude for our great liberality. This I enjoyed somewhat. The villain is not a difficult one to manage, at least in the financial way. I leave the dénouement to you, Louis."

"The dénouement must not be long delayed now."

"Well, for that matter things are so arranged that we may have 'the beginning of the end' as soon as you choose."

"What are the debts of the Brandon Bank to us now?"

"Five hundred and fifteen thousand one hundred and fifty pounds," said Frank.

"Five hundred thousand—very good," returned Louis, thoughtfully. "And how is the sum secured?"

"Chiefly by acknowledgments from the bank with the indorsement of John Potts, President."

"What are the other liabilities?"

"He has implored me to purchase for him or sell him some California stock. I have reluctantly consented to do so," continued Frank, with a sardonic smile, "entirely through the request of my senior, and he has taken a hundred shares at a thousand pounds each."

"One hundred thousand pounds," said Louis.

"I consented to take his notes," continued Frank, "purely out of regard to the recommendations of my senior."

"Any thing else?" asked Louis.

"He urged me to recommend him to a good broker who might purchase stock for him in reliable companies. I created a broker and recommended him. He asked me also confidentially to tell him which stocks were best, so I kindly advised him to purchase the Mexican and the Guatemala loan. I also recommended the Venezuela bonds. I threw all these into the market, and by dextrous manipulation raised the price to 3 per cent. premium. He paid £103 for every £100. When he wants to sell out, as he may one day wish to do, he will be lucky if he gets 35 per cent."

"How much did he buy?"

"Mexican loan, fifty thousand; Guatemala, fifty thousand; and Venezuela bonds, fifty thousand."

"He is quite lavish."

"Oh, quite. That makes it so pleasant to do business with him."

"Did you advance the money for this?"

"He did not ask it. He raised the money somehow, perhaps from our old advances, and bought them from the broker. The broker was of course myself. The beauty of all this is, that I send applicants for money, who give their notes; he gets money from me and gives his notes to me, and then advances the money to these applicants, who bring it back to me. It's odd, isn't it?"

Louis smiled.

"Has he no *bona fide* debtors in his own county?"

"Oh yes, plenty of them; but more than half of his advances have been made to my men."

"Did you hint any thing about issuing notes?"

"Oh yes, and the bait took wonderfully. He made his bank a bank of issue at once, and sent out a hundred and fifty thousand pounds in notes. I think it was in this way that he got the money for all that American stock. At any rate, it helped him. As he has only a small supply of gold in his vaults, you may very readily conjecture his peculiar position."

Louis was silent for a time.

"You have managed admirably, Frank," said he at last.

"Oh," rejoined Frank, "Potts is very small game, financially. There is no skill needed in playing with him. He is such a clumsy bungler that he does whatever one wishes. There is not even excitement. Whatever I tell him to do he does. Now if I were anxious to crush the Rothschilds, it would be very different. There would then be a chance for skill."

"You have had the chance."

"I did not wish to ruin them," said Frank. "Too many innocent people would have suffered. I only wished to alarm them. I rather think, from what I hear, that they were a little disturbed on that day when they had to pay four millions. Yet I could have crushed them if I had chosen, and I managed things so as to let them see this."

"How?"

"I controlled other engagements of theirs, and on the same day I magnanimously wrote them a letter, saying that I would not press for payment, as their notes were as good to me as money. Had I pressed they would have gone down. Nothing could have saved them. But I did not wish that. The fact is they have locked up their means very much, and have been rather careless of late. They have learned a lesson now."

Louis relapsed into his reflections, and Frank began to answer his letters.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE "PROMETHEUS."

It took some time for Langhetti to make his preparations in London. September came before he had completed them. To his surprise these arrangements were much easier than he had supposed. People came to him of their own accord before he thought it possible that they could have heard of his project. What most surprised him was a call from the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, who offered to put it into his hands for a price so low as to surprise Langhetti more than any thing else that had occurred. Of course he accepted the offer gratefully and eagerly. The manager said that the building was on his hands, and he did not wish to use it for the present, for which reason he would be glad to turn it over to him. He remarked also that there was very much stock in the theatre that could be made use of, for which he would charge nothing whatever. Langhetti went to see it, and found a large number of magnificently painted scenes, which could be used in his piece. On asking the manager how scenes of this sort came to be there, he learned that some one had been representing the "Midsummer Night's Dream," or something of that sort.

Langhetti's means were very limited, and as he had risked every thing on this experiment he was rejoiced to find events so very greatly in his favor.

Another circumstance which was equally in his favor, if not more so, was the kind consideration of the London papers. They announced his forthcoming work over and over again. Some of their writers came to see him so as to get the particulars, and what little he told them they described in the most attractive and effective manner.

A large number of people presented themselves to form his company, and he also received applications by letter from many whose eminence and fortunes placed them above the need of any such thing. It was simply incomprehensible to Langhetti, who thoroughly understood the ways of the musical world; yet since they offered he was only too happy to accept. On having interviews with these persons he was amazed to find that they were one and all totally indifferent about terms; they all assured him that they were ready to take any part whatever, and merely wished to assist in the representation of a piece so new and so original as his was said to be. They all named a price which was excessively low, and assured him that they did so only for form's sake; positively refusing to accept any thing more, and leaving it to Langhetti either to take them on their own terms or to reject them. He, of course, could not reject aid so powerful and so unexpected.

At length he had his rehearsal. After various trials he invited representatives of the London Press to be present at the last. They all came, and all without exception wrote the most glowing accounts for their respective journals.

"I don't know how it is," said he to Beatrice. "Every thing has come into my hands. I don't understand it. It seems to me exactly as if there was some powerful, unseen hand assisting me; some one who secretly put every thing in my way, who paid these artists first and then sent them to me, and influenced all the journals in my favor. I should be sure of this if it were not a more incredible thing than the actual result itself. As it is I am simply perplexed and bewildered. It is a thing that is without parallel. I have a company such as no one has ever before gathered together on one stage. I have eminent prima donnas who are quite willing to sing second and third parts without caring what I pay them, or whether I pay them or not. I know the musical world. All I can say is that the thing is unexampled, and I can not comprehend it. I have tried to find out from some of them what it all means, but they give me no satisfaction. At any rate, my Bicina, you will make your *début* under the most favorable circumstances. You saw how they admired your voice at the rehearsal. The world shall admire it still more at your first performance."

Langhetti was puzzled, and, as he said, bewildered, but he did not slacken a single effort to make his opera successful. His exertions were as unremitting as though he were still struggling against difficulties. After all that had been done for him he knew very well that he was sure of a good house, yet he worked as hard as though his audience was very uncertain.

At length the appointed evening came. Langhetti had certainly expected a good house from those happy accidents which had given him the co-operation of the entire musical world and of the press. Yet when he looked out and saw the house that waited for the rising of the curtain he was overwhelmed.

When he thus looked out it was long before the time. A great murmur had attracted his attention. He saw the house crammed in every part. All the boxes were filled. In the pit was a vast congregation of gentlemen and ladies, the very galleries were thronged.

The wonder that had all along filled him was now greater than ever. He well knew under what circumstances even an ordinarily good house is collected together. There must either be undoubted fame in the prima donna, or else the most wide-spread and comprehensive efforts on the part of a skillful impresario. His efforts had been great, but not such as to insure any thing like this. To account for the prodigious crowd which filled every part of the large edifice was simply impossible.

He did not attempt to account for it. He accepted the situation, and prepared for the performance.

What sort of an idea that audience may have had of the "Prometheus" of Langhetti need hardly be conjectured. They had heard of it as a novelty. They had heard that the company was the best ever collected at one time, and that the prima donna was a prodigy of genius. That was enough for them. They waited in a state of expectation which was so high-pitched that it would have proved disastrous in the extreme to any piece, or any singer who should have proved to be in the slightest degree inferior. Consummate excellence alone in every part could now save the piece from ruin. This Langhetti felt; but he was calm, for he had confidence in his work and in his company. Most of all, he had confidence in Beatrice.

At last the curtain rose.

The scene was such a one as had never before

been represented. A blaze of dazzling light filled the stage, and before it stood seven forms, representing the seven archangels. They began one of the sublimest strains ever heard. Each of these singers had in some way won eminence. They had thrown themselves into this work. The music which had been given to them had produced an exalted effect upon their own hearts, and now they rendered forth that grand "Chorus of Angels" which those who heard the "Prometheus" have never forgotten. The words resembled, in some measure, the opening song in Goethe's "Faust," but the music was Langhetti's.

The effect of this magnificent opening was wonderful. The audience sat spell-bound — hushed into stillness by those transcendant harmonies which seemed like the very song of the angels themselves; like that "new song" which is spoken of in Revelation. The grandeur of Handel's stupendous chords was renewed, and every one present felt its power.

Then came the second scene. Prometheus lay suffering. The ocean nymphs were around him, sympathizing with his woes. The sufferer lay chained to a bleak rock in the summit of frosty Caucasus. Far and wide extended an expanse of ice. In the distance arose a vast world of snow-covered peaks. In front was a *mer de glace*, which extended all along the stage.

Prometheus addressed all nature—"the divine ether, the swift-winged winds, Earth the All-mother, and the infinite laughter of the ocean waves." The thoughts were those of Æschylus, expressed by the music of Langhetti.

The ocean nymphs bewailed him in a song of mournful sweetness, whose indescribable pathos touched every heart. It was the intensity of sympathy—sympathy so profound that it became anguish, for the heart that felt it had identified itself with the heart of the sufferer.

Then followed an extraordinary strain. It was the Voice of Universal Nature, animate and inanimate, mourning over the agony of the God of Love. In that strain was heard the voice of man, the sighing of the winds, the moaning of the sea, the murmur of the trees, the wail of bird and beast, all blending in extraordinary unison, and all speaking of woe.

And now a third scene opened. It was Athene. Athene represented Wisdom or Human Understanding, by which the God of Vengeance is dethroned, and gives place to the eternal rule of the God of Love. To but few of those present could this idea of Langhetti's be intelligible. The most of them merely regarded the fable and its music, without looking for any meaning beneath the surface.

To these, and to all, the appearance of Beatrice was like a new revelation. She came forward and stood in the costume which the Greek has given to Athene, but in her hand she held the olive—her emblem—instead of the spear. From beneath her helmet her dark locks flowed down and were wreathed in thick waves that clustered heavily about her head.

Here, as Athene, the pure classical contour of Beatrice's features appeared in marvelous beauty—faultless in their perfect Grecian mould. Her large, dark eyes looked with a certain solemn meaning out upon the vast audience. Her whole face was refined and sublimed by the thought that was within her. In her artistic nature she had appropriated this character to herself so thoroughly, that, as she stood there, she felt herself to be in reality all that she represented. The spectators caught the same feeling from her. Yet so marvelous was her beauty, so astonishing was the perfection of her form and feature, so accurate was the living representation of the ideal goddess that the whole vast audience after one glance burst forth into pealing thunders of spontaneous and irresistible applause.

Beatrice had opened her mouth to begin, but as that thunder of admiration arose she fell back a pace. Was it the applause that had overawed her?

Her eyes were fixed on one spot at the extreme right of the pit. A face was there which enchained her. A face, pale, sad, mournful, with dark eyes fixed on hers in steadfast despair.

Beatrice faltered and fell back, but it was not at the roar of applause. It was that face—the one face among three thousand before her, the one, the only one that she saw. Ah, how in that moment all the past came rushing before her—the Indian Ocean, the Malay pirate, where that face first appeared, the Atlantic, the shipwreck, the long sail over the seas in the boat, the African isle!

She stood so long in silence that the spectators wondered.

Suddenly the face which had so transfixed her sank down. He was gone, or he had hid himself. Was it because he knew that he was the cause of her silence?

The face disappeared, and the spell was broken. Langhetti stood at the side-scenes, watching with deep agitation the silence of Beatrice. He was on the point of taking the desperate step of going forward when he saw that she had regained her composure.

She regained it, and moved a step forward with such calm serenity that no one could have suspected her of having lost it. She began to sing. In an opera words are nothing—music is all in all. It is sufficient if the words express, even in a feeble and general way, the ideas which breathe and burn in the music. Thus it was with the words in the opening song of Beatrice.

But the music! What language can describe it?

Upon this all the richest stores of Langhetti's genius had been lavished. Into this all the soul of Beatrice was thrown with sublime self-forgetfulness. She ceased to be herself. Before the audience she was Athene.

Her voice, always marvelously rich and full, was now grander and more capacious than ever. It poured forth a full stream of matchless harmony that carried all the audience captive. Strong, soaring, penetrating, it rose easily to the highest notes, and flung them forth with a lavish, and at the same time far-reaching power that penetrated every heart, and thrilled all who heard it. Roused to the highest enthusiasm by the sight of that vast assemblage, Beatrice gave herself up to the intoxication of the hour. She threw herself into the spirit of the piece; she took deep into her heart the thought of Langhetti, and uttered it forth to the listeners with harmonies that were almost divine—such harmonies as they had never before heard.

There was the silence of death as she sang. Her voice stilled all other sounds. Each listen-

"THE

er seemed almost afra
ed at one another in
them sat motionless,
forward, unconscious
one voice.
At last it ceased.

"THE APPEARANCE OF BEATRICE WAS LIKE A NEW REVELATION."

er seemed almost afraid to breathe. Some looked at one another in amazement, but most of them sat motionless, with their heads stretched forward, unconscious of any thing except that one voice.

At last it ceased. For a moment there was a pause. Then there arose a deep, low thunder of applause that deepened and intensified itself every moment till at last it rose on high in one sublime outburst, a frenzy of acclamation, such as is heard but seldom, but, once heard, is never forgotten.

Beatrice was called out. She came, and retired. Again and again she was called. Flowers were showered down in heaps at her feet. The acclamations went on, and only ceased through the consciousness that more was yet to come. The piece went on. It was one long triumph. At last it ended. Beatrice had been loaded with honors. Langhetti was called out and welcomed with almost equal enthusiasm. His eyes filled with tears of joy as he received this well-merited tribute to his genius. He and Beatrice stood on the stage at the same time. Flowers were flung at him. He took them and laid them at the feet of Beatrice.

At this a louder roar of acclamation arose. It increased and deepened, and the two who stood there felt overwhelmed by the tremendous applause.

So ended the first representation of the "Prometheus!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE SECRET.

THE triumph of Beatrice continued. The daily papers were filled with accounts of the new singer. She had come suddenly before them, and had at one bound reached the highest eminence. She had eclipsed all the popular favorites. Her sublime strains, her glorious enthusiasm, her marvelous voice, her perfect beauty, all kindled the popular heart. The people forgave her for not having an Italian name, since she had one which was so aristocratic. Her whole appearance showed that she was something very different from the common order of artistes, as different, in fact, as the "Prometheus" was from the common order of operas. For here in the "Prometheus" there were no endless iterations of the one theme of love, no perpetual repetitions of the same rhyme of *amore* and *cuore*, or *amor'* and *cuor'*; but rather the effort of the soul after sublimer mysteries. The "Prometheus" sought to solve the problem of life and of human suffering. Its divine sentiments brought hope and consolation. The great singer rose to the altitude of a sibyl; she uttered inspirations; she herself was inspired.

As she stood with her grand Grecian beauty, her pure classic features, she looked as beautiful as a statue, and as ideal and passionless. In one sense she could never be a popular favorite. She had no archness or coquetry like some, no voluptuousness like others, no arts to win applause like others. Still she stood up and sang as one who believed that this was the highest mission of humanity, to utter divine truth to human ears. She sang loftily, thrillingly, as an angel might sing, and those who saw her revered her while they listened.

And thus it was that the fame of this new singer went quickly through England, and foreign journals spoke of it half-wonderingly, half-cynically, as usual; for Continentals never have any faith in English art, or in the power which any Englishman may have to interpret art. The leading French journals conjectured that the "Prometheus" was of a religious character, and therefore Puritanical; and consequently for that reason was popular. They amused themselves with the idea of a Puritanical opera, declared that the English wished to Protestantize music, and suggested "Calvin" or "The Sabbath" as good subjects for this new and entirely English class of operas.

But soon the correspondents of some of the Continental papers began to write glowing accounts of the piece, and to put Langhetti in the same class with Handel. He was an Italian, they said, but in this case he united Italian grace and versatility with German solemnity and melancholy. They declared that he was the greatest of living composers, and promised for him a great reputation.

Night after night the representation of the "Prometheus" went on with undiminished success; and with a larger and profounder appreciation of its meaning among the better class of minds. Langhetti began to show a stronger and fuller confidence in the success of his piece than he had yet dared to evince. Yet now its success seemed assured. What more could he wish?

September came on, and every succeeding night only made the success more marked. One day Langhetti was with Beatrice at the theatre, and they were talking of many things. There seemed to be something on his mind, for he spoke in an abstracted manner. Beatrice noticed this at last, and mentioned it.

He was at first very mysterious. "It must be that secret of yours which you will not tell me," said she. "You said once before that it was connected with me, and that you would tell it to me when the time came. Has not the time come yet?"

"Not yet," answered Langhetti.

"When will it come?"

"I don't know."

"And will you keep it secret always?"

"Perhaps not."

"You speak undecidedly."

"I am undecided."

"Why not decide now to tell it?" pleaded Beatrice. "Why should I not know it? Surely I have gone through enough suffering to bear this, even if it bring something additional."

Langhetti looked at her long and doubtfully.

"You hesitate," said she.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"It is of too much importance."

"That is all the more reason why I should know it. Would it crush me if I knew it?"

"I don't know. It might."

"Then let me be crushed."

Langhetti sighed.

"Is it something that you know for certain, or is it only conjecture?"

"Neither," said he, "but half-way between the two."

Beatrice looked earnestly at him for some time. Then she put her head nearer to his and spoke in a solemn whisper.

"It is about my mother!"

Langhetti looked at her with a startled expression.

"Is it not?"

He bowed his head.

"It is—it is. And if so, I implore—I conjure you to tell me. Look—I am calm. Think—I am strong. I am not one who can be cast down merely by bad news."

"I may tell you soon."

"Say you will."

"I will," said Langhetti, after a struggle.

"When?"

"Soon."

"Why not to-morrow?"

"That is too soon; you are impatient."

"Of course I am," said Beatrice. "Ought I not to be so? Have you not said that this concerns me? and is not all my imagination aroused in the endeavor to form a conjecture as to what it may be?"

She spoke so earnestly that Langhetti was moved, and looked still more undecided.

"When will you tell me?"

"Soon, perhaps," he replied, with some hesitation.

"Why not now?"

"Oh no, I must assure myself first about some things."

"To-morrow, then."

He hesitated.

"Yes," said she; "it must be to-morrow. If you do not, I shall think that you have little or no confidence in me. I shall expect it to-morrow."

Langhetti was silent.

"I shall expect it to-morrow," repeated Beatrice.

Langhetti still continued silent.

"Oh, very well; silence gives consent!" said she, in a lively tone.

"I have not consented."

"Yes you have, by your silence."

"I was deliberating."

"I asked you twice, and you did not refuse; surely that means consent."

"I do not say so," said Langhetti, earnestly.

"But you will do so."

"Do not be so certain."

"Yes, I will be certain; and if you do not tell me you will very deeply disappoint me."

"In telling you I could only give you sorrow."

"Sorrow or joy, whatever it is, I can bear it so long as I know this. You will not suppose that I am actuated by simple feminine curiosity. You know me better. This secret is one which subjects me to the tortures of suspense, and I am anxious to have them removed."

"The removal will be worse than the suspense."

"That is impossible."

"You would not say so if you knew what it was."

"Tell me, then."

"That is what I fear to do."

"Do you fear for me, or for some other person?"

"Only for you."

"Do not fear for me, then, I beseech you; for it is not only my desire, but my prayer, that I may know this."

Langhetti seemed to be in deep perplexity. Whatever this secret was with which he was so troubled he seemed afraid to tell it to Beatrice, either from fear that it might not be any thing in itself or result in any thing, or, as seemed more probable, lest it might too greatly affect her. This last was the motive which appeared to influence him most strongly. In either case, the secret of which he spoke must have been one of a highly important character, affecting most deeply the life and fortunes of Beatrice herself. She had formed her own ideas and her own expectations about it, and this made her all the more urgent, and even peremptory, in her demand. In fact, things had come to such a point that Langhetti found himself no longer able to refuse, and now only sought how to postpone his divulgence of his secret.

Yet even this Beatrice combated, and would listen to no later postponement than the morrow.

At length, after long resistance to her demand, Langhetti assented, and promised on the morrow to tell her what it was that he had meant by his secret.

For, as she gathered from his conversation, it was something that he had first discovered in Hong Kong, and had never since forgotten, but had tried to make it certain. His efforts had thus far been useless, and he did not wish to tell her till he could bring proof. That proof, unfortunately, he was not able to find, and he could only tell his conjectures.

It was for these, then, that Beatrice waited in anxious expectation.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE CAB.

THAT evening Beatrice's performance had been greeted with louder applause than usual, and, what was more gratifying to one like her, the effective passages had been listened to with a stillness which spoke more loudly than the loudest applause of the deep interest of the audience.

Langhetti had almost always driven home with her, but on this occasion he had excused himself on account of some business in the theatre which required his attention.

On going out Beatrice could not find the cabman whom she had employed. After looking around for him a long time she found that he had gone. She was surprised and vexed. At the same time she could not account for this, but thought that perhaps he had been drinking and had forgotten all about her. On making this discovery she was on the point of going back and telling Langhetti, but a cabman followed her persistently, promising to take her wherever she wished, and she thought that it would be foolish to trouble Langhetti about so small a matter; so that at length she decided to employ the persevering cabman, thinking that he could take her to her lodgings as well as any body else.

The cabman started off at a rapid pace, and went on through street after street, while Beatrice sat thinking of the evening's performance.

At last it seemed to her that she had been a much longer time than usual, and she began to fear that the cabman had lost his way. She looked out. They were going along the upper part of Oxford Street, a great distance from where she lived. She instantly tried to draw down the window so as to attract the cabman's attention, but could not move it. She tried the other, but all were fast and would not stir. She rapped at the glass to make him hear, but he took no notice. Then she tried to open the door, but could not do so from the inside.

She sat down and thought. What could be the meaning of this? They were now going at a much faster rate than is common in the streets of London, but where she was going she could not conjecture.

She was not afraid. Her chief feeling was one of indignation. Either the cabman was drunk—or what? Could he have been hired to carry her off to her enemies? Was she betrayed?

This thought flashed like lightning through her mind.

She was not one who would sink down into inaction at the sudden onset of terror. Her chief feeling now was one of indignation at the audacity of such an attempt. Obeying the first impulse that seized her, she took the solid roll of music which she carried with her and dashed it against the front window so violently that she broke it in pieces. Then she caught the driver by the sleeve and ordered him to stop.

"All right," said the driver, and, turning a corner, he whipped up his horses, and they galloped on faster than ever.

"If you don't stop I'll call for help!" cried Beatrice.

The driver's only answer was a fresh application of the whip.

The street up which they turned was narrow, and as it had only dwelling-houses it was not so brightly lighted as Oxford Street. There were but few foot-passengers on the sidewalk. As it was now about midnight, most of the lights were out, and the gas-lamps were the chief means of illumination.

Yet there was a chance that the police might save her. With this hope she dashed her music scroll against the windows on each side of the cab and shivered them to atoms, calling at the top of her voice for help. The swift rush of the cab and the sound of a woman's voice shouting for aid aroused the police. They started forward. But the horses were rushing so swiftly that no one dared to touch them. The driver seemed to them to have lost control. They thought that the horses were running away, and that those within the cab were frightened.

Away they went through street after street, and Beatrice never ceased to call. The excitement which was created by the runaway horses did not abate, and at length when the driver stopped a policeman hurried up.

The house before which the cab stopped was a plain two-story one, in a quiet-looking street. A light shone from the front-parlor window. As the cab drew up the door opened and a man came out.

Beatrice saw the policeman.

"Help!" she cried; "I implore help. This wretch is carrying me away."

"What's this?" growled the policeman.

At this the man that had come out of the house hurried forward.

"Have you found her?" exclaimed a well-known voice. "Oh, my child! How could you leave your father's roof!"

It was John Potts.

Beatrice was silent for a moment in utter amazement. Yet she made a violent effort against her despair.

"You have no control over me," said she, bitterly. "I am of age. And you," said she to the policeman, "I demand your help. I put myself under your protection, and order you either to take that man in charge or to let me go to my home."

"Oh, my daughter!" cried Potts. "Will you still be relentless?"

"Help me!" cried Beatrice, and she opened the cab-door.

"The policeman can do nothing," said Potts. "You are not of age. He will not dare to take you from me."

"I implore you," cried Beatrice, "save me from this man. Take me to the police-station—any where rather than leave me here!"

"You can not," said Potts to the bewildered policeman. "Listen. She is my daughter and under age. She ran away with a strolling Italian vagabond, with whom she is leading an improper life. I have got her back."

"It's false!" cried Beatrice vehemently. "I fled from this man's house because I feared his violence."

"That is an idle story," said Potts.

"Save me!" cried Beatrice.

"I don't know what to do—I suppose I've got to take you to the station, at any rate," said the policeman, hesitatingly.

"Well," said Potts to Beatrice, "if you do go to the station-house you'll have to be handed back to me. You are under age."

"It's false!" cried Beatrice. "I am twenty."

"No, you are not more than seventeen."

"Langhetti can prove that I am twenty."

"How? I have documents, and a father's word will be believed before a paramour's."

This taunt stung Beatrice to the soul.

"As to your charge about my cruelty I can prove to the world that you lived in splendor in Brandon Hall. Every one of the servants can testify to this. Your morose disposition made you keep by yourself. You always treated your father with indifference, and finally ran away with a man who unfortunately had won your affections in Hong Kong."

"You well know the reason why I left your roof," replied Beatrice, with calm and severe dignity. "Your foul aspersions upon my character are unworthy of notice."

"And what shall I say about your aspersions on my character?" cried Potts, in a loud, rude voice, hoping by a sort of vulgar self-assertion to brow-beat Beatrice. "Do you remember the names you called me and your threats against me? When all this is brought out in the police court, they will see what kind of a daughter you have been."

"You will be the last one who will dare to let it be brought into a police court."

"And why? Those absurd charges of yours are worthless. Have you any proof?" he continued, with a sneer, "or has your paramour any?"

"Take me away," said Beatrice to the policeman.

"Wait!" exclaimed Potts; "you are going, and I will go to reclaim you. The law will give you back to me; for I will prove that you are under age, and I have never treated you with any thing except kindness. Now the law can do nothing since you are mine. But as you are so young and inexperienced I'll tell you what will happen.

"The newspapers," he continued, after a pause, "will be full of your story. They will print what I shall prove to be true—that you had an intractable disposition—that you had formed a guilty attachment for a drum-major at Hong Kong—that you ran away with him, lived for a

"OH, MY DA

while at Holby, and th
mour to London. If y
you would have been ou
don't pretend to be m
yourself Langhetti, bu
name, which the sharp
hint was given you by
numerous favorites. T
love every man but your
you who played the go
sang about Truth and
all over England and all
vilest of the vile."

At this tremendous m
tion was shattered to p
be so she well knew. T

K

"OH, MY DAUGHTER!" CRIED POTTS, "WILL YOU STILL BE RELENTLESS?"

while at Holby, and then went with your paramour to London. If you had only married him you would have been out of my power; but you don't pretend to be married. You don't call yourself Langhetti, but have taken another name, which the sharp newspaper reporters will hint was given you by some other one of your numerous favorites. They will declare that you love every man but your own father; and you—you who played the goddess on the stage and sang about Truth and Religion will be known all over England and all over Europe too as the vilest of the vile."

At this tremendous menace Beatrice's resolution was shattered to pieces. That this would be so she well knew. To escape from Potts was to have herself made infamous publicly under the sanction of the law, and then, by that same law to be handed back to him. At least whether it was so or not, she thought so. There was no help—no friend.

"Go," said Potts; "leave me now and you become covered with infamy. Who would believe your story?"

Beatrice was silent, her slender frame was rent by emotion.

"O God!" she groaned—but in her deep despair she could not find thoughts even for prayers.

"You may go, policeman," said Potts; "my daughter will come with me."

"Faith and I'm glad! It's the best thing for

her;" and the policeman, much relieved, returned to his beat.

"Some of you 'll have to pay for them winders," said the cabman.

"All right," answered Potts, quietly.

"There is your home for to-night, at any rate," said Potts, pointing to the house. "I don't think you have any chance left. You had better go in."

His tone was one full of bitter taunt. Scarce conscious, with her brain reeling, and her limbs trembling, Beatrice entered the house.

CHAPTER XL.

DISCOVERIES.

THE next morning after Beatrice's last performance Langhetti determined to fulfill his promise and tell her that secret which she had been so anxious to know. On entering into his parlor he saw a letter lying on the table addressed to him. It bore no postage stamp, or post-office mark.

He opened it and read the following:

"LONDON, *September* 5, 1849.

"SIGNORE,—Cigole, the betrayer and intended assassin of your late father, is now in London. You can find out about him by inquiring of Giovanni Cavallo, 16 Red Lion Street. As a traitor to the Carbonari, you will know that it is your duty to punish him, even if your filial piety is not strong enough to avenge a father's wrongs.

"CARBONARO."

Langhetti read this several times. Then he called for his landlord.

"Who left this letter?" he asked.

"A young man."

"Do you know his name?"

"No."

"What did he look like?"

"He looked like a counting-house clerk more than any thing."

"When was it left?"

"About six o'clock this morning."

Langhetti read it over and over. The news that it contained filled his mind. It was not yet ten o'clock. He would not take any breakfast, but went out at once, jumped into a cab, and drove off to Red Lion Street.

Giovanni Cavallo's office was in a low, dingy building, with a dark, narrow doorway. It was one of those numerous establishments conducted and supported by foreigners whose particular business it is not easy to conjecture. The building was full of offices, but this was on the ground-floor.

Langhetti entered, and found the interior as dingy as the exterior. There was a table in the middle of the room. Beyond this was a door which opened into a back-room.

Only one person was here—a small, bright-eyed man, with thick Vandyke beard and sinewy though small frame. Langhetti took off his hat and bowed.

"I wish to see Signore Cavallo," said he, in Italian.

"I am Signore Cavallo," answered the other, blandly.

Langhetti made a peculiar motion with his left arm. The keen eye of the other noticed it in an instant. He returned a gesture of a similar character. Langhetti and he then exchanged some more secret signs. At last Langhetti made one which caused the other to start, and to bow with deep respect.

"I did not know," said he, in a low voice, "that any of the Interior Council ever came to London.....But come in here," and he led the way into the inner room, the door of which he locked very mysteriously.

A long conference followed, the details of which would only be tedious. At the close Cavallo said,

"There is some life in us yet, and what life we have left shall be spent in trapping that miscreant. Italy shall be avenged on one of her traitors, at any rate."

"You will write as I told you, and let me know?"

"Most faithfully."

Langhetti departed, satisfied with the result of this interview. What surprised him most was the letter. The writer must have been one who had been acquainted with his past life. He was amazed to find any one denouncing Cigole to him, but finally concluded that it must be some old Carbonaro, exiled through the afflictions which had befallen that famous society, and cherishing in his exile the bitter resentment which only exiles can feel.

Cavallo himself had known Cigole for years, but had no idea whatever of his early career. Cigole had no suspicion that Cavallo had any thing to do with the Carbonari. His firm were general agents, who did business of a miscellaneous character, now commission, now banking, and now shipping; and in various ways they had had dealings with this man, and kept up an irregular correspondence with him.

This letter had excited afresh within his ardent and impetuous nature all the remembrances of early wrongs. Gentle though he was, and pure in heart, and elevated in all his aspirations, he yet was in all respects a true child of the South, and his passionate nature was roused to a storm by this prospect of just retaliation. All the lofty doctrines with which he might console others were of no avail here in giving him calm. He had never voluntarily pursued Cigole; but now, since this villain had been presented to him, he could not turn aside from what he considered the holy duty of avenging a father's wrongs.

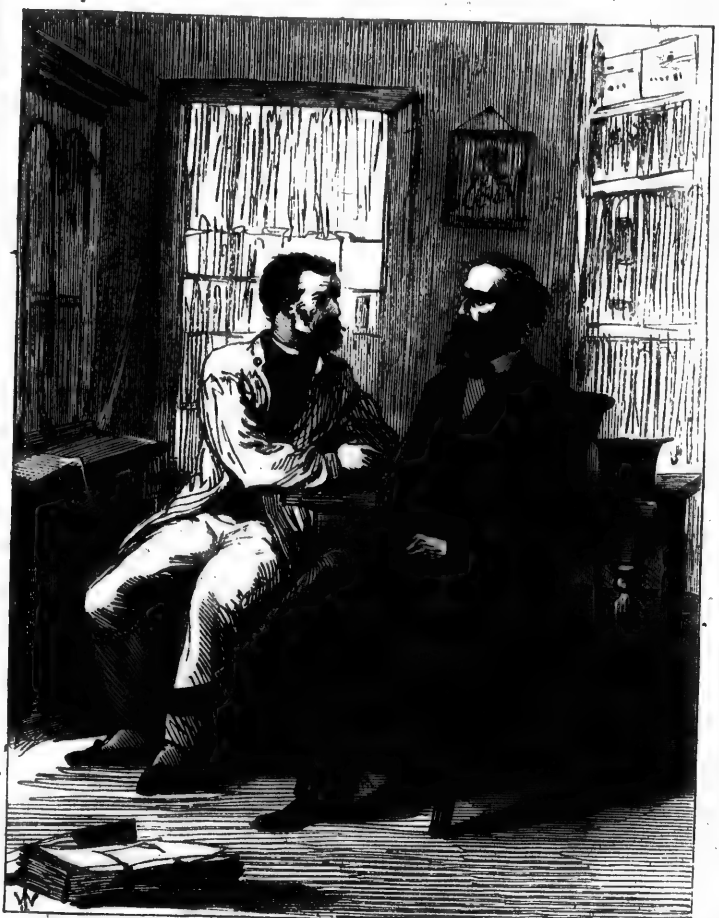
He saw that for the present every thing would have to give way to this. He determined at once to suspend the representation of the "Prometheus," even though it was at the height of its popularity and in the full tide of its success. He determined to send Beatrice under his sister's care, and to devote himself now altogether to the pursuit of Cigole, even if he had to follow him to the world's end. The search after him might not be long after all, for Cavallo felt sanguine of speedy success, and assured him that the traitor was in his power, and that the Carbonari in London were sufficiently numerous to seize him and send him to whatever punishment might be deemed most fitting.

With such plans and purposes Langhetti went to visit Beatrice, wondering how she would receive the intelligence of his new purpose.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon before he reached her lodgings. On going up he rapped. A servant came, and on seeing him looked frightened.

"WHAT LIFE W

"Is Miss Despard in
The servant said not
ghetti stood waiting in
time the landlady cam
look, and did not even
"Is Miss Despard in
"She is not here, Sir
"Not here!"
"No, Sir. I'm fright
here early this morning,
"A man here. Wh
"Why, to ask after h
"And did he see her
"She wasn't here."
"Wasn't here! Wh



"WHAT LIFE WE HAVE LEFT SHALL BE SPENT IN TRAPPING THAT MISCREANT."

"Is Miss Despard in?"

The servant said nothing, but ran off. Langhetti stood waiting in surprise; but in a short time the landlady came. She had a troubled look, and did not even return his salutation.

"Is Miss Despard in?"

"She is not here, Sir."

"Not here!"

"No, Sir. I'm frightened. There was a man here early this morning, too."

"A man here. What for?"

"Why, to ask after her."

"And did he see her?"

"She wasn't here."

"Wasn't here! What do you mean?"

"She didn't come home at all last night. I waited up for her till four."

"Didn't come home!" cried Langhetti, as an awful fear came over him.

"No, Sir."

"Do you mean to tell me that she didn't come home at her usual hour?"

"No, Sir—not at all; and as I was saying, I sat up nearly all night."

"Heavens!" cried Langhetti, in bewilderment. "What is the meaning of this? But take me to her room. Let me see with my own eyes."

The landlady led the way up, and Langhetti followed anxiously. The rooms were empty. Every thing remained just as she had left it. Her

music was lying loosely around. The landlady said that she had touched nothing.

Langhetti asked about the man who had called in the morning. The landlady could tell nothing about him, except that he was a gentleman with dark hair, and very stern eyes that terrified her. He seemed to be very angry or very terrible in some way about Beatrice.

Who could this be? thought Langhetti. The landlady did not know his name. Some one was certainly interesting himself very singularly about Cigole, and some one else, or else the same person, was very much interested about Beatrice. For a moment he thought it might be Despard. This, however, did not seem probable, as Despard would have written him if he were coming to town.

Deeply perplexed, and almost in despair, Langhetti left the house and drove home, thinking on the way what ought to be done. He thought he would wait till evening, and perhaps she would appear. He did thus wait, and in a fever of excitement and suspense, but on going to the lodging-house again there was nothing more known about her.

Leaving this he drove to the police-office. It seemed to him now that she must have been foully dealt with in some way. He could think of no one but Potts; yet how Potts could manage it was a mystery. That mystery he himself could not hope to unravel. The police might. With that confidence in the police which is common to all Continentals he went and made known his troubles. The officials at once promised to make inquiries, and told him to call on the following evening.

The next evening he went there. The policeman was present who had been at the place when Potts met Beatrice. He told the whole story—the horses running furiously, the screams from the cab, and the appeal of Beatrice for help, together with her final acquiescence in the will of her father.

Langhetti was overwhelmed. The officials evidently believed that Potts was an injured father, and showed some coldness to Langhetti.

"He is her father; what better could she do?" asked one.

"Any thing would be better," said Langhetti, mournfully. "He is a villain so remorseless that she had to fly. Some friends received her. She went to get her own living since she is of age. Can nothing be done to rescue her?"

"Well, she might begin a lawsuit; if she really is of age he can not hold her. But she had much better stay with him."

Such were the opinions of the officials. They courteously granted permission to Langhetti to take the policeman to the house.

On knocking an old woman came to the door. In answer to his inquiries she stated that a gentleman had been living there three weeks, but that on the arrival of his daughter he had gone home.

"When did he leave?"

"Yesterday morning."

CHAPTER XLI.

THEY MEET AGAIN.

At four o'clock on the morning of Beatrice's capture Brandon was roused by a rap at his bedroom door. He rose at once, and slipping on his dressing-gown, opened it. A man entered.

"Well?" said Brandon.

"Something has happened."

"What?"

"She didn't get home last night. The landlady is sitting up for her, and is terribly frightened."

"Did you make any inquiries?"

"No, Sir; I came straight here in obedience to your directions."

"Is that all you know?"

"All."

"Very well," said Brandon, calmly, "you may go."

The man retired. Brandon sat down and buried his head in his hands. Such news as this was sufficient to overwhelm any one. The man knew nothing more than this, that she had not returned home and that the landlady was frightened. In his opinion only one of two things could have happened: either Langhetti had taken her somewhere, or she had been abducted.

A thousand fancies followed one another in quick succession. It was too early as yet to go forth to make inquiries; and he therefore was forced to sit still and form conjectures as to what ought to be done in case his conjecture might be true. Sitting there, he took a rapid survey of all the possibilities of the occasion, and laid his plans accordingly.

Brandon had feared some calamity, and with this fear had arranged to have some one in the house who might give him information. The information which he most dreaded had come; it had come, too, in the midst of a time of triumph, when she had become one of the supreme singers of the age, and had gained all that her warmest admirer might desire for her.

If she had not been foully dealt with she must have gone with Langhetti. But if so—where—and why? What possible reason might Langhetti have for taking her away? This conjecture was impossible.

Yet if this was impossible, and if she had not gone with Langhetti, with whom could she have gone? If not a friend, then it must have been with an enemy. But with what enemy? There was only one.

He thought of Potts. He knew that this wretch was capable of any villainy, and would not hesitate at any thing to regain possession of the one who had fled from him. Why he should wish to take the trouble to regain possession of her, except out of pure villainy, he could not imagine.

With such thoughts as these the time passed heavily. Six o'clock at last came, and he set out for the purpose of making inquiries. He went first to the theatre. Here, after some trouble, he found those who had the place in charge, and, by questioning them, he learned that Beatrice had left by herself in a cab for her home, and that Langhetti had remained some time later. He then went to Beatrice's lodgings to question the landlady. From there he went to Langhetti's lodgings, and found that Langhetti had come home about one o'clock and was not yet up.

Beatrice, therefore, had left by herself, and had not gone any where with Langhetti. She had not returned home. It seemed to him most probable that either voluntarily or involuntarily she had come under the control of Potts. What to do under these circumstances was now the question.

One course seemed to him the most direct and certain; namely, to go up to Brandon at once and make inquiries there. From the letters which Philips had sent he had an idea of the doings of Potts. Other sources of information had also been secured. It was not his business to do any thing more than to see that Beatrice should fall into no harm.

By ten o'clock he had acted upon this idea, and was at the railway station to take the express train. He reached Brandon village about dusk. He went to the inn in his usual disguise as Mr. Smithers, and sent up to the hall for Mr. Potts.

Potts was not there. He then sent for Philips. After some delay Philips came. His usual timidity was now if possible still more marked, and he was at first too embarrassed to speak.

"Where is Potts?" asked Brandon, abruptly.

"In London, Sir."

"He has been there about three weeks, hasn't he?"

"Yes, Sir."

"So you wrote me. You thought when he went that he was going to hunt up his daughter."

"So I conjectured."

"And he hasn't got back yet?"

"Not yet."

"Has he written any word?"

"None that I know of."

"Did you hear any of them say why he went to get her?"

"Not particularly; but I guessed from what they said that he was afraid of having her at large."

"Afraid? Why?"

"Because she knew some secret of theirs."

"Secret! What secret?" asked Brandon.

"You know, Sir, I suppose," said Philips, meekly.

Brandon had carried Asgeelo with him, as he was often in the habit of doing on his journeys. After his interview with Philips he stood outside on the veranda of the village inn for some time, and then went around through the village, stopping at a number of houses. Whatever it was that he was engaged in, it occupied him for several hours, and he did not get back to the inn till midnight.

On the following morning he sent up to the Hall, but Potts had not yet returned. Philips came to tell him that he had just received a telegraphic dispatch informing him that Potts would be back that day about one o'clock. This intelligence at last seemed to promise something definite.

Brandon found enough to occupy him during the morning among the people of the neighborhood. He seemed to know every body, and had something to say to every one. Yet no one looked at him or spoke to him unless he took the initiative. Last of all, he went to the tailor's, where he spent an hour.

Asgeelo had been left at the inn, and sat there upon a bench outside, apparently idle and aimless. At one o'clock Brandon returned and walked up and down the veranda.

In about half an hour his attention was attracted by the sound of wheels. It was Potts's barouche, which came rapidly up the road. In it was Potts and a young lady.

Brandon stood outside of the veranda, on the steps, in such a position as to be most conspicuous, and waited there till the carriage should reach the place. Did his heart beat faster as he recognized that form, as he marked the settled despair which had gathered over that young face —a face that had the fixed and unalterable wretchedness which marks the ideal face of the Mater Dolorosa?

Brandon stood in such a way that Potts could not help seeing him. He waved his arm, and Potts stopped the carriage at once.

Potts was seated on the front seat, and Beatrice on the back one. Brandon walked up to the carriage and touched his hat.

"Mr. Smithers!" cried Potts, with his usual volubility. "Dear me, Sir. This is really a most unexpected pleasure, Sir."

While Potts spoke Brandon looked steadily at Beatrice, who cast upon him a look of wonder. She then sank back in her seat; but her eyes were still fastened on his as though fascinated. Then, beneath the marble whiteness of her face a faint tinge appeared, a warm flush, that was the sign of hope rising from despair. In her eyes there gleamed the flash of recognition; for in that glance each had made known all its soul to the other. In her mind there was no perplexing question as to how or why he came here, or wherefore he wore that disguise; the one thought that she had was the consciousness that He was here—here before her.

All this took place in an instant, and Potts, who was talking, did not notice the hurried glance; or if he did, saw in it nothing but a casual look cast by one stranger upon another.

"I arrived here yesterday," said Brandon. "I wished to see you about a matter of very little importance perhaps to you, but it is one which is of interest to me. But I am detaining you. By-the-way, I am somewhat in a hurry, and if this lady will excuse me I will drive up with you to the Hall, so as to lose no time."

"Delighted, Sir, delighted!" cried Potts. "Allow me, Mr. Smithers, to introduce you to my daughter."

Brandon held out his hand. Beatrice held out hers. It was cold as ice, but the fierce thrill that shot through her frame at the touch of his feverish hand brought with it such an ecstasy that Beatrice thought it was worth while to have undergone the horror of the past twenty-four hours for the joy of this one moment.

Brandon stepped into the carriage and seated himself by her side. Potts sat opposite. He touched her. He could hear her breathing. How many months had passed since they sat so near together! What sorrows had they not endured! Now they were side by side, and for a moment they forgot that their bitterest enemy sat before them.

There, before them, was the man who was not only a deadly enemy to each, but who made it impossible for them to be more to one another than they now were. Yet for a time they forgot this in the joy of the ecstatic meeting. At the gate Potts got out and excused himself to Brandon, saying that he would be up directly.

"Entertain this gentleman till I come," said he to Beatrice, "for he is a great friend of mine."

Beatrice said nothing, for the simple reason that she could not speak.

They drove on. Oh, joy! that baleful presence was for a moment removed. The driver saw nothing as he drove under the overarching elms—the elms under which Brandon had sported in his boyhood. He saw not the long, fervid glance that they cast at one another, in which each seemed to absorb all the being of the other; he saw not the close clasped hands with which they clung to one another now as though they would thus cling to each other forever and prevent separation. He saw not the swift, wild movement of Brandon when for one instant he flung his arm around Beatrice and pressed her to his heart. He heard not the beating of that strong heart; he heard not the low sigh of rapture with which for but one instant the head of Beatrice sank upon her lover's breast. It was but for an instant. Then she sat upright again, and their hands sought each other, thus clinging, thus speaking by a voice which was fully intelligible to each, which told how each felt in the presence of the other love unutterable, rapture beyond expression.

They alighted from the carriage. Beatrice led the way into the drawing-room. No one was there. Brandon went into a recess of one of the windows which commanded a view of the Park.

"What a beautiful view!" said he, in a conventional voice.

She came up and stood beside him.

"Oh, my darling! Oh, my darling!" he cried, over and over again; and flinging his arms around her he covered her face with burning kisses. Her whole being seemed in that supreme moment to be absorbed in his. All consciousness of any other thing than this unspeakable joy was lost to her. Before all others she was lofty, high-souled, serene, self-possessed—with him she was nothing, she lost herself in him.

"Do not fear, my soul's darling," said he; "no harm shall come. My power is every where—even in this house. All in the village are mine. When my blow falls you shall be saved."

She shuddered.

"You will leave me here?"

"Heavens! I must," he groaned; "we are the sport of circumstances. Oh, my darling!" he continued, "you know my story, and my vengeance."

"I know it all," she whispered. "I would wish to die if I could die by your hand."

"I will save you. Oh, love—oh, soul of mine—my arms are around you! You are watched—but watched by me."

"You do not know," she sighed. "Alas! your father's voice must be obeyed, and your vengeance must be taken."

"Fear not," said he; "I will guard you."

She answered nothing. Could she confide in his assurance? She could not. She thought with horror of the life before her. What could Brandon do? She could not imagine.

They stood thus in silence for a long time. Each felt that this was their last meeting, and each threw all life and all thought into the rapture of this long and ecstatic embrace. After this the impassable gulf must reopen. She was of the blood of the accursed. They must separate forever.

He kissed her. He pressed her a thousand times to his heart. His burning kisses forced a new and feverish life into her, which roused all her nature. Never before had he dared so to fling open all his soul to her; never before had he so clasped her to his heart; but now this moment was a break in the agony of a long separation—a short interval which must soon end and give way to the misery which had preceded it—and so he yielded to the rapture of the hour, and defied the future.

The moments extended themselves. They were left thus for a longer time than they hoped. Potts did not come. They were still clinging to one another. She had flung her arms around him in the anguish of her unspeakable love, he had clasped her to his wildly-throbbing heart, and he was straining her there recklessly and despairingly, when suddenly a harsh voice burst upon their ears.

"The devil!"

Beatrice did not hear it. Brandon did, and turned his face. Potts stood before them.

"Mr. Potts!" said he, as he still held Beatrice close to his heart, "this poor young lady is in wretched health. She nearly fainted. I had to almost carry her to the window. Will you be good enough to open it, so as to give her some air? Is she subject to these faints? Poor child!" he said; "the air of this place ought surely to do you good. I sympathize with you most deeply, Mr. Potts."

"She's sickly—that's a fact," said Potts. "I'm very sorry that you have had so much trouble—I hope you'll excuse me. I only thought that she'd entertain you, for she's very clever. Has all the accomplishments—"

"Perhaps you'd better call some one to take care of her," interrupted Brandon.

"Oh, I'll fetch some one. I'm sorry it happened so. I hope you won't blame me, Sir," said Potts, humbly, and he hurried out of the room.

Beatrice had not moved. She heard Brandon speak to some one, and at first gave herself up for lost, but in an instant she understood the full meaning of his words. To his admirable presence of mind she added her own. She did not move, but allowed her head to rest where it was, feeling a delicious joy in the thought that Potts was looking on and was utterly deceived. When he left to call a servant she raised her head and gave Brandon a last look expressive of her deathless, her unutterable love. Again and again he pressed her to his heart. Then the noise of servants coming in roused him. He gently placed her on a sofa, and supported her with a grave and solemn face.

"Here, Mrs. Compton. Take charge of her," said Potts. "She's been trying to faint."

Mrs. Compton came up, and kneeling down kissed Beatrice's hands. She said nothing.

"Oughtn't she to have a doctor?" said Brandon.

"Oh no—she'll get over it. Take her to her room, Mrs. Compton."

"Can the poor child walk?" asked Brandon.

Beatrice rose. Mrs. Compton asked her to

take her arm. She
upon it, walked awa
"She seems ver
"I did not know th
Potts sighed.
"I have," said he
"To your sorrov
quisitely simulated s
"Yes," replied th
to every one—but y
ent from most peop
roving life. I had t
many years with a f
she was not very w
rate, she got acquai
ing Italian vagabond
the regiments, name

"THE DEVIL!".... POTTS STOOD BEFORE THEM.

take her arm. She did so, and leaning heavily upon it, walked away.

"She seems very delicate," said Brandon. "I did not know that you had a daughter."

Potts sighed.

"I have," said he, "to my sorrow."

"To your sorrow!" said Brandon, with exquisitely simulated sympathy.

"Yes," replied the other. "I wouldn't tell it to every one—but you, Mr. Smithers, are different from most people. You see I have led a roving life. I had to leave her out in China for many years with a female guardian. I suppose she was not very well taken care of. At any rate, she got acquainted out there with a strolling Italian vagabond, a drum-major in one of the regiments, named Langhetti, and this villain gained her affections by his hellish arts. He knew that I was rich, and, like an unprincipled adventurer, tried to get her, hoping to get a fortune. I did not know any thing about this till after her arrival home. I sent for her some time ago and she came. From the first she was very sulky. She did not treat me like a daughter at all. On one occasion she actually abused me and called me names to my face. She called me a Thug! What do you think of that, Mr. Smithers?"

The other said nothing, but there was in his face a horror which Potts considered as directed toward his unnatural offspring.

"She was discontented here, though I let her have every thing. I found out in the end all about it. At last she actually ran away. She

joined this infamous Langhetti, whom she had discovered in some way or other." They lived together for some time, and then went to London, where she got a situation as an actress. You can imagine by that," said Potts, with sanctimonious horror, "how low she had fallen."

"Well, I didn't know what to do. I was afraid to make a public demand for her through the law, for then it would all get into the papers; it would be an awful disgrace, and the whole county would know it. So I waited, and a few weeks ago I went to London. A chance occurred at last which threw her in my way. I pointed out to her the awful nature of the life she was leading, and offered to forgive her all if she would only come back. The poor girl consented, and here she is. But I'm very much afraid," said Potts in conclusion, with a deep sigh, "that her constitution is broken up. She's very feeble."

Brandon said nothing.

"Excuse me for troubling you with my domestic affairs; but I thought I ought to explain, for you have had such trouble with her yourself."

"Oh, don't mention it. I quite pitied the poor child, I assure you; and I sincerely hope that the seclusion of this place, combined with the pure sea-air, may restore her spirits and invigorate her in mind as well as in body. And now, Mr. Potts, I will mention the little matter that brought me here. I have had business in Cornwall, and was on my way home when I received a letter summoning me to America. I may have to go to California. I have a very honest servant, whom I have quite a strong regard for, and I am anxious to put him in some good country house till I get back. I'm afraid to trust him in London, and I can't take him with me. He is a Hindu, but speaks English and can do almost any thing. I at once remembered you, especially as you were close by me, and thought that in your large establishment you might find a place for him. How is it?"

"My dear Sir, I shall be proud and happy. I should like, above all things, to have a man here who is recommended by one like you. The fact is, my servants are all miserable, and a good one can not often be had. I shall consider it a favor if I can get him."

"Well, that is all arranged—I have a regard for him, as I said before, and want to have him in a pleasant situation. His name is Asgeelo, but we are in the habit of calling him Cato—"

"Cato! a very good name. Where is he now?"

"At the hotel. I will send him to you at once," said Brandon, rising.

"The sooner the better," returned Potts.

"By-the-way, my junior speaks very encouragingly about the prospects of the Brandon Bank—"

"Does he?" cried Potts, gleefully. "Well, I do believe we're going ahead of every thing."

"That's right. Boldness is the true way to success."

"Oh, never fear. We are bold enough."

"Good. But I am hurried, and I must go. I will send Asgeelo up, and give him a letter."

With these words Brandon bowed an adieu and departed. Before evening Asgeelo was installed as one of the servants.

CHAPTER XLII.

LANGHETTI'S ATTEMPT.

Two days after Brandon's visit to Potts, Langhetti reached the village.

A searching examination in London had led him to believe that Beatrice might now be sought for at Brandon Hall. The police could do nothing for him. He had no right to her. If she was of age, she was her own mistress, and must make application herself for her safety and deliverance; if she was under age, then she must show that she was treated with cruelty. None of these things could be done, and Langhetti despaired of accomplishing any thing.

The idea of her being once more in the power of a man like Potts was frightful to him. This idea filled his mind continually, to the exclusion of all other thoughts. His opera was forgotten. One great horror stood before him, and all else became of no account. The only thing for him to do was to try to save her. He could find no way, and therefore determined to go and see Potts himself.

It was a desperate undertaking. From Beatrice's descriptions he had an idea of the life from which she had fled, and other things had given him a true idea of the character of Potts. He knew that there was scarcely any hope before him. Yet he went, to satisfy himself by making a last effort.

He was hardly the man to deal with one like Potts. Sensitive, high-toned, passionate, impetuous in his feelings, he could not command that calmness which was the first essential in such an interview. Besides, he was broken down by anxiety and want of sleep. His sorrow for Beatrice had disturbed all his thoughts. Food and sleep were alike abominable to him. His fine-strung nerves and delicate organization, in which every feeling had been rendered more acute by his mode of life, were of that kind which could feel intensely wherever the affections were concerned. His material frame was too weak for the presence of such an ardent soul. Whenever any emotion of unusual power appeared he sank rapidly.

So now, feverish, emaciated, excited to an intense degree, he appeared in Brandon to confront a cool, unemotional villain, who scarcely ever lost his presence of mind. Such a contest could scarcely be an equal one. What could he bring forward which could in any way affect such a man? He had some ideas in his own mind which he imagined might be of service, and trusted more to impulse than any thing else. He went up early in the morning to Brandon Hall.

Potts was at home, and did not keep Langhetti long waiting.

There was a vast contrast between these two men—the one coarse, fat, vulgar, and strong; the other refined, slender, spiritual, and delicate, with his large eyes burning in their deep sockets, and a strange mystery in his face.

"I am Paolo Langhetti," said he, abruptly—"the manager of the Covent Garden Theatre."

"You are, are you?" answered Potts, rudely; "then the sooner you get out of this the better. The devil himself couldn't be more impudent. I have just saved my daughter from your clutches, and I'm going to pay you off, too, my fine fellow, before long."

"Your daughter!" said Langhetti. "What she is, and who she is, you very well know. If the dead could speak they would tell a different story."

"What the devil do you mean," cried Potts, "by the dead? At any rate you are a fool; for very naturally the dead can't speak; but what concern that has with my daughter I don't know. Mind, you are playing a dangerous game in trying to bully me."

Potts spoke fiercely and menacingly. Langhetti's impetuous soul kindled to a new fervor at this insulting language. He stretched out his long, thin hand toward Potts, and said:

"I hold your life and fortune in my hand. Give up that girl whom you call your daughter."

Potts stood for a moment staring.

"The devil you do!" he cried, at last. "Come, I call that good, rich, racy! Will your sublime Excellency have the kindness to explain yourself? If my life is in your hand it's in a devilish lean and weak one. It strikes me you've got some kink in your brain—some notion or other. Out with it, and let us see what you're driving at!"

"Do you know a man named Cigole?" said Langhetti.

"Cigole!" replied Potts, after a pause, in which he had stared hard at Langhetti; "well, what if I do? Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't."

"He is in my power," said Langhetti, vehemently.

"Much good may he do you then, for I'm sure when he was in my power he never did any good to me."

"He will do good in this case, at any rate," said Langhetti, with an effort at calmness. "He was connected with you in a deed which you must remember, and can tell to the world what he knows."

"Well, what if he does?" said Potts.

"He will tell," cried Langhetti, excitedly, "the true story of the Despard murder."

"Ah!" said Potts, "now the murder's out. That's what I thought. Don't you suppose I saw through you when you first began to speak so mysteriously? I knew that you had learned some wonderful story, and that you were going to trot it out at the right time. But if you think you're going to bully me you'll find it hard work."

"Cigole is in my power," said Langhetti, fiercely.

"And so you think I am, too?" sneered Potts.

"Partly so."

"Why?"

"Because he was an accomplice of yours in the Despard murder."

"So he says, no doubt; but who'll believe him?"

"He is going to turn Queen's evidence!" said Langhetti, solemnly.

"Queen's evidence!" returned Potts, contemptuously, "and what's his evidence worth—the evidence of a man like that against a gentleman of unblemished character?"

"He will be able to show what the character of that *gentleman* is," rejoined Langhetti.

"Who will believe him?"

"No one can help it."

"You believe him, no doubt. You and he are both Italians—both dear friends—and both enemies of mine; but suppose I prove to the world conclusively that Cigole is such a scoundrel that his testimony is worthless?"

"You can't," cried Langhetti, furiously.

Potts cast a look of contempt at him—

"Can't I!" He resumed: "How very simple, how confiding you must be, my dear Langhetti! Let me explain my meaning. You get up a wild charge against a gentleman of character and position about a murder. In the first place, you seem to forget that the real murderer has long since been punished. That miserable devil of a Malay was very properly convicted at Manilla, and hanged there. It was twenty years ago. What English court would consider the case again after a calm and impartial Spanish court has settled it finally, and punished the criminal? They did so at the time when the case was fresh, and I came forth honored and triumphant. You now bring forward a man who, you hint, will make statements against me. Suppose he does? What then? Why, I will show what this man is. And you, my dear Langhetti, will be the first one whom I will bring up against him. I will bring you up under oath, and make you tell how this Cigole—this man who testifies against me—once made a certain testimony in Sicily against a certain Langhetti senior, by which that certain Langhetti senior was betrayed to the Government, and was saved only by the folly of two Englishmen, one of whom was this same Despard. I will show that this Langhetti senior was your father, and that the son, instead of avenging, or at any rate resenting, his father's wrong, is now a bosom friend of his father's intended murderer—that he has urged him on against me. I will show, my dear Langhetti, how you have led a roving life, and, when a drum-major at Hong Kong, won the affections of my daughter; how you followed her here, and seduced her away from a kind father; how at infinite risk I regained her; how you came to me with audacious threats; and how only the dread of further scandal, and my own anxious love for my daughter, prevented me from handing you over to the authorities. I will prove you to be a scoundrel of the vilest description, and, after such proof as this, what do you think would be the verdict of an English jury, or of any judge in any land; and what do you think would be your own fate? Answer me that."

Potts spoke with savage vehemence. The frightful truth flashed at once across Langhetti's mind that Potts had it in his power here to show all this to the world. He was overwhelmed. He had never conceived the possibility of this. Potts watched him silently, with a sneer on his face.

"Don't you think that you had better go and comfort yourself with your dear friend Cigole, your father's intended murderer?" said he at length. "Cigole told me all about this long ago. He told me many things about his life which would be slightly damaging to his character as a witness, but I don't mind telling you that the worst thing against him in English eyes is his betrayal of your father. But this seems to have been a very slight matter to you. It's odd too; I've always supposed that Italians understood what vengeance means."

Langhetti's face bore an expression of agony which he could not conceal. Every word of Potts stung him to the soul. He stood for some

time in silence. At last, without a word, he walked out of the room.

His brain reeled. He staggered rather than walked. Potts looked after him with a smile of triumph. He left the Hall and returned to the village.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE STRANGER.

A FEW weeks after Langhetti's visit Potts had a new visitor at the bank. The stranger entered the bank parlor noiselessly, and stood quietly waiting for Potts to be disengaged. That worthy was making some entries in a small memorandum-book. Turning his head, he saw the newcomer. Potts looked surprised, and the stranger said, in a peculiar voice, somewhat gruff and hesitating,

"Mr. Potts?"

"Yes," said Potts, looking hard at his visitor.

He was a man of singular aspect. His hair was long, parted in the middle, and straight. He wore dark colored spectacles. A thick, black beard ran under his chin. His linen was not over-clean, and he wore a long surtout coat.

"I belong to the firm of Bigelow, Higginson, & Co., Solicitors, London—I am the Co."

"Well!"

"The business about which I have come is one of some importance. Are we secure from interruption?"

"Yes," said Potts, "as much as I care about being. I don't know any thing in particular that I care about locking the doors for."

"Well, you know best," said the stranger. "The business upon which I have come concerns you somewhat, but your son principally."

Potts started, and looked with eager inquiry at the stranger.

"It is such a serious case," said the latter, "that my seniors thought, before taking any steps in the matter, it would be best to consult you privately."

"Well," returned Potts, with a frown, "what is this wonderful case?"

"Forgery," said the stranger.

Potts started to his feet with a ghastly face, and stood speechless for some time.

"Do you know who you're talking to?" said he, at last.

"John Potts, of Brandon Hall, I presume," said the stranger, coolly. "My business concerns him somewhat, but his son still more."

"What the devil do you mean?" growled Potts, in a savage tone.

"Forgery," said the stranger. "It is an English word, I believe. Forgery, in which your son was chief agent. Have I made myself understood?"

Potts looked at him again, and then slowly went to the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"That's right," said the stranger, quietly.

"You appear to take things easy," rejoined Potts, angrily; "but let me tell you, if you come to bully me you've got into the wrong shop."

"You appear somewhat heated. You must be calm, or else we can not get to business; and in that case I shall have to leave."

"I don't see how that would be any affliction," said Potts, with a sneer.

"That's because you don't understand my position, or the state of the present business. For if I leave it will be the signal for a number of interested parties to make a combined attack on you."

"An attack?"

"Yes."

"Who is there?" said Potts, defiantly.

"Giovanni Cavallo, for one; my seniors, Messrs. Bigelow & Higginson, and several others."

"Never heard of any of them before."

"Perhaps not. But if you write to Smithers & Co., they will tell you that Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. are their solicitors, and do their confidential business."

"Smithers & Co.?" said Potts, aghast.

"Yes. It would not be for your interest for Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. to show Smithers & Co. the proofs which they have against you, would it?"

Potts was silent. An expression of consternation came over his face. He plunged his hands deep in his pockets and bowed his head frowningly.

"It's all bosh," said he, at last, raising his head. "Let them show and be d——d. What have they got to show?"

"I will answer your question regularly," said the stranger, "in accordance with my instructions"—and, drawing a pocket-book from his pocket, he began to read from some memoranda written there.

"*1st.* The notes to which the name of Ralph Brandon is attached, 150 in number, amounting to £93,500."

"Pooh!" said Potts.

"These forgeries were known to several besides your son and yourself, and one of these men will testify against you. Others who know Brandon's signature swear that this lacks an important point of distinction common to all the Brandon signatures handed down from father to son. You were foolish to leave these notes afloat. They have all been bought up on a speculation by those who wished to make the Brandon property a little dearer."

"I don't think they'll make a fortune out of the speculation," said Potts, who was stifling with rage. "D——n them! who are they?"

"Well, there are several witnesses who are men of such character that if my seniors sent them to Smithers & Co. Smithers & Co. would believe that you were guilty. In a court of law you would have no better chance. One of these witnesses says he can prove that your true name is Briggs."

At this Potts bounded from his chair and stepped forward with a terrific oath.

"You see, your son's neck is in very considerable danger."

"Yours is in greater," said Potts, with menacing eyes.

"Not at all. Even supposing that you were absurd enough to offer violence to an humble subordinate like me, it would not interfere with the policy of Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co., who are determined to make money out of this transaction. So you see it's absurd to talk of violence."

The stranger took no further notice of Potts, but looked again at his memoranda; while the latter, whose face was now terrific from the furious passions which it exhibited, stood like a wild beast in a cage, "willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike."

"The next case," said the stranger, "is the Thornton forgery."

"Thornton!" exclaimed Potts, with greater agitation.

"Yes," said the stranger. "In connection with the Despard murder there were two sets of forgeries; one being the Thornton correspondence, and the other your correspondence with the Bank of Good Hope."

"Heavens! what's all this?" cried Potts. "Where have you been unearthing this rubbish?"

"First," said the stranger, without noticing Potts's exclamation, "there are the letters to Thornton, Senior, twenty years ago, in which an attempt was made to obtain Colonel Despard's money for yourself. One Clark, an accomplice of yours, presented the letter. The forgery was at once detected. Clark might have escaped, but he made an effort at burglary, was caught, and condemned to transportation. He had been already out once before, and this time received a new brand in addition to the old ones."

Potts did not say a word, but sat stupefied.

"Thornton, Junior, is connected with us, and his testimony is valuable, as he was the one who detected the forgery. He also was the one who went to the Cape of Good Hope, where he had the pleasure of meeting with you. This brings me to the third case," continued the stranger.

"Letters were sent to the Cape of Good Hope, ordering money to be paid to John Potts. Thornton, Senior, fearing from the first attempt that a similar one would be made at the Cape, where the deceased had funds, sent his son there. Young Thornton reached the place just before you did, and would have arrested you, but the proof was not sufficient."

"Aha!" cried Potts, grasping at this—"not sufficient proof! I should think not." His voice was husky and his manner nervous.

"I said I was not—but Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. have informed me that there are parties now in communication with them who can prove how, when, where, and by whom the forgeries were executed."

"It's a d——d infernal lie!" roared Potts, in a fresh burst of anger.

"I only repeat what they state. The man has already written out a statement in full, and is only waiting for my return to sign it before a magistrate. This will be a death-warrant for your son; for Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. will have him arrested at once. You are aware that he has no chance of escape. The amount is too egormous, and the proof is too strong."

"Proof!" cried Potts, desperately; "who would believe any thing against a man like me, John Potts—a man of the county?"

"English law is no respecter of persons," said the stranger. "Rank goes for nothing. But if it did make class distinctions, the witnesses about these documents are of great influence. There is Thornton of Holby, and Colonel Henry Despard at the Cape of Good Hope, with whom Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. have had correspondence. There are also others."

"It's all a lie!" exclaimed Potts, in a voice which was a little tremulous. "Who is this fool who has been making out papers?"

"His name is Philips; true name Lawton. He tells a very extraordinary story; very extraordinary indeed."

The stranger's peculiar voice was now intensified in its odd, harsh intonations. The effect on Potts was overwhelming. For a moment he was unable to speak.

"Philips!" he gasped, at length.

"Yes. You sent him on business to Smithers & Co. He has not yet returned. He does not intend to, for he was found out by Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co., and you know how timid he is. They have succeeded in extracting the truth from him. As I am in a hurry, and you, too, must be busy," continued the stranger, with unchanged accents, "I will now come to the point. These forged papers involve an amount to the extent of—Brandon forgeries, £93,500; Thornton papers, £5000; Bank of Good Hope, £4000; being in all £102,500. Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. have instructed me to say that they will sell these papers to you at their face without charging interest. They will hand them over to you and you can destroy them, in which case, of course, the charge must be dropped."

"Philips!" cried Potts. "I'll have that devil's blood!"

"That would be murder," said the stranger, with a peculiar emphasis.

His tone stung Potts to the quick.

"You appear to take me for a born fool," he cried, striding up and down.

"Not at all. I am only an agent carrying out the instructions of others."

Potts suddenly stopped in his walk.

"Have you all those papers about you?" he hissed.

"All."

Potts looked all around. The door was locked. They were alone. The stranger easily read his thought.

"No use," said he, calmly. "Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. would miss me if any thing happened. Besides, I may as well tell you that I am armed."

The stranger rose up and faced Potts, while, from behind his dark spectacles, his eyes seemed to glow like fire. Potts retreated with a curse.

"Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. instructed me to say that if I am not back with the money by to-morrow night, they will at once begin action, and have your son arrested. They will also inform Smithers & Co., to whom they say you are indebted for over £600,000. So that Smithers & Co. will at once come down upon you for payment."

"Do Smithers & Co. know any thing about this?" asked Potts, in a voice of intense anxiety.

"They do business with you the same as ever, do they not?"

"Yes."

"How do you suppose they can know it?"

"They would never believe it."

"They would believe any statement made by Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. My seniors have been on your track for a long time, and have come into connection with various parties. One

man who is an Italian they consider important. They authorize me to state to you that this man can also prove the forgeries."

"Who?" gasped Potts.

"His name is Cigole."

"Cigole!"

"Yes."

"D—— him!"

"You may damn him, but that won't silence him," remarked the other, mildly.

"Well, what are you going to do?" growled Potts.

"Present you the offer of Messrs. Bigelow, Higginson, & Co.," said the other, with calm pertinacity. "Upon it depend your fortune and your son's life."

"How long are you going to wait?"

"Till evening. I leave to-night. Perhaps you would like to think this over. I'll give you till three o'clock. If you decide to accept, all well; if not, I go back."

The stranger rose, and Potts unlocked the door for him.

After he left Potts sat down, buried in his own reflections. In about an hour Clark came in.

"Well, Johnnie!" said he, "what's up? You look down—any trouble?"

At this Potts told Clark the story of the recent interview. Clark looked grave, and shook his head several times.

"Bad! bad! bad!" said he, slowly, when Potts had ended. "You're in a tight place, lad, and I don't see what you've got to do but to knock under."

A long silence followed.

"When did that chap say he would leave?"

"To-night."

Another silence.

"I suppose," said Clark, "we can find out how he goes?"

"I suppose so," returned Potts, gloomily.

"Somebody might go with him or follow him," said Clark, darkly.

Potts looked at him. The two exchanged glances of intelligence.

"You see, you pay your money, and get your papers back. It would be foolish to let this man get away with so much money. One hundred and two thousand five hundred isn't to be picked up every day. Let us pick it up this time, or try to. I can drop down to the inn this evening, and see the cut of the man. I don't like what he said about me. I call it backbiting."

"You take a proper view of the matter," said Potts. "He's dangerous. He'll be down on you next. What I don't like about him is his cold-bloodedness."

"It does come hard."

"Well, we'll arrange it that way, shall we?"

"Yes, you pay over, and get your documents, and I'll try my hand at getting the money back. I've done harder things than that in my time, and so have you—hey, lad!"

"I remember a few."

"I wonder if this man knows any of them."

"No," said Potts, confidently. "He would have said something."

"Don't be too sure. The fact is, I've been troubled ever since that girl came out so strong on us. What are you going to do with her?"

"Don't know," growled Potts. "Keep her still somehow."

"Give her to me."

"What'll you do with her?" asked Potts, in surprise.

"Take her as my wife," said Clark, with a grin. "I think I'll follow your example and set up housekeeping. The girl's plucky; and I'd like to take her down."

"We'll do it; and the sooner the better. You don't want a minister, do you?"

"Well, I think I'll have it done up ship-shape; marriage in high life; papers all full of it; lovely appearance of the bride—ha, ha, ha! I'll save you all further trouble about her—a husband is better than a father in such a case. If that Italian comes round it'll be his last round."

Some further conversation followed, in which Clark kept making perpetual references to his bride. The idea had taken hold of his mind completely.

At one o'clock Potts went to the inn, where he found the agent. He handed over the money in silence. The agent gave him the documents. Potts looked at them all carefully.

Then he departed.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE STRANGER'S STORY.

THAT evening a number of people were in the principal parlor of the Brandon Inn. It was a cool evening in October; and there was a fire near which the partner of Bigelow, Higginson, & Co. had seated himself.

Clark had come in at the first of the evening and had been there ever since, talking volubly and laughing boisterously. The others were more or less talkative, but none of them rivaled Clark. They were nearly all Brandon people; and in their treatment of Clark there was a certain restraint which the latter either did not wish or care to notice. As for the stranger he sat apart in silence without regarding any one in particular, and giving no indication whether he was listening to what was going on or was indifferent to it all. From time to time Clark threw glances in his direction, and once or twice he tried to draw some of the company out to make remarks about him; but the company seemed reluctant to touch upon the subject, and merely listened with patience.

Clark had evidently a desire in his mind to be very entertaining and lively. With this intent he told a number of stories, most of which were intermingled with allusions to the company present, together with the stranger. At last he gazed at the latter in silence for some little time, and then turned to the company.

"There's one among us that hasn't opened his mouth this evening. I call it unsociable. I move that the party proceed to open it forthwith. Who seconds the motion? Don't all speak at once."

The company looked at one another, but no one made any reply.

"What! no one speaks! All right; silence gives consent;" and with these words Clark advanced toward the stranger. The latter said nothing, but sat in a careless attitude.

"Friend!" said Clark, standing before the stranger, "we're all friends here—we wish to be sociable—we think you are too silent—will you

be kind enough to open your mouth? If you won't tell a story, perhaps you will be good enough to sing us a song?"

The stranger sat upright.

"Well," said he, in the same peculiar harsh voice and slow tone with which he had spoken to Potts, "the request is a fair one, and I shall be happy to open my mouth. I regret to state that having no voice I shall be unable to give you a song, but I'll be glad to tell a story, if the company will listen."

"The company will feel honored," said Clark, in a mocking tone, as he resumed his seat.

The stranger arose, and, going to the fire-place, picked up a piece of charcoal.

Clark sat in the midst of the circle, looking at him with a sneering smile.

"It's rather an odd story," said the stranger, "and I only heard it the other day; perhaps you won't believe it, but it's true."

"Oh, never mind the truth of it!" exclaimed Clark—"push along."

The stranger stepped up to the wall over the fire-place.

"Before I begin I wish to make a few marks, which I will explain in process of time. My story is connected with these."

He took his charcoal and made upon the wall the following marks:

He then turned, and stood for a moment in silence.

The effect upon Clark was appalling. His face turned livid, his arms clutched violently at the seat of his chair, his jaw fell, and his eyes were fixed on the marks as though fascinated by them.

The stranger appeared to take no notice of him.

"These marks," said he, "were, or rather are, upon the back of a friend of mine, about whom I am going to tell a little story:

"The first (↑) is the Queen's mark, put on certain prisoners out in Botany Bay, who are totally insubordinate.

"The second (R) signifies 'run away,' and is put on those who have attempted to escape.

"The third (+) indicates a murderous assault on the guards. When they don't hang the culprit they put this on, and those who are branded in this way have nothing but hard work, in chains, for life.

"These marks are on the back of a friend of mine, whose name I need not mention, but for convenience sake I will call him Clark."

Clark didn't even resent this, but sat mute, with a face of awful expectation.

"My friend Clark had led a life of strange vicissitudes," said the stranger, "having slipped through the meshes of the law very successfully a great number of times, but finally he was caught, and sent to Botany Bay. He served his time out, and left; but, finally, after a series of very extraordinary adventures in India, and some odd events in the Indian Ocean, he came to England. Bad luck followed him, however. He made an attempt at burglary, and was caught, convicted, and sent back again to his old station at Botany Bay.

"Of course he felt a strong reluctance to stay in such a place, and therefore began to plan an escape. He made one attempt, which was unsuccessful. He then laid a plot with two other notorious offenders. Each of these three had been branded with those letters which I have marked. One of these was named Stubbs, and another Wilson, the third was this Clark. No one knew how they met to make their arrangements, for the prison regulations are very strict; but they did meet, and managed to confer together. They contrived to get rid of the chains that were fastened around their ankles, and one stormy night they started off and made a run for it.

"The next day the guards were out in pursuit with dogs. They went all day long on their track over a very rough country, and finally came to a river. Here they prepared to pass the night.

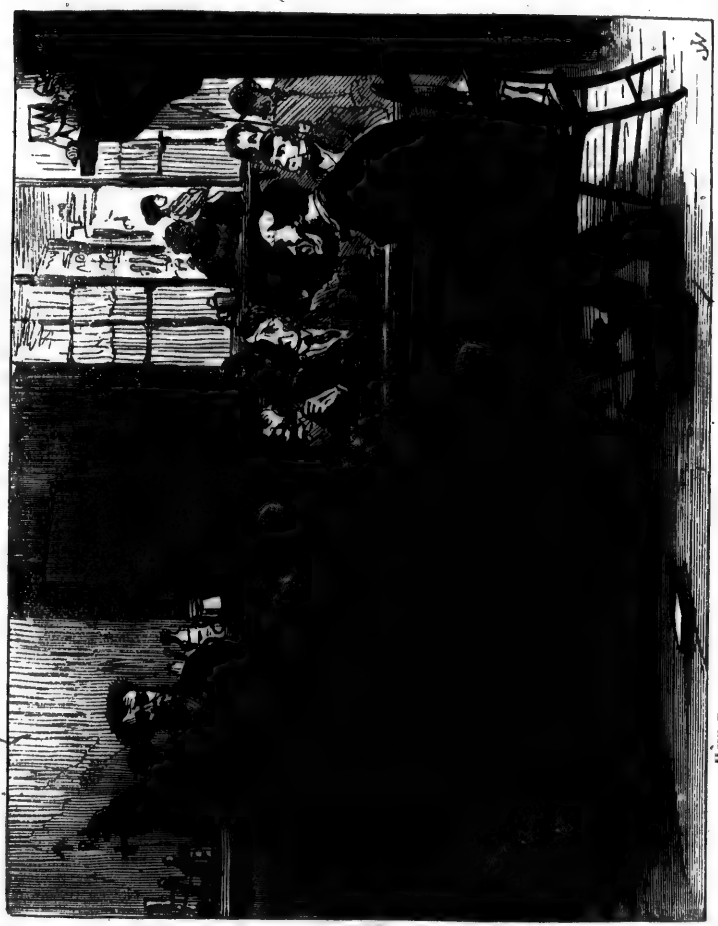
"On rising early on the following morning they saw something moving on the top of a hill on the opposite side of the river. On watching it narrowly they saw three men. They hurried on at once in pursuit. The fugitives kept well ahead, however, as was natural; and since they were running for life and freedom they made a better pace.

"But they were pretty well worn out. They had taken no provisions with them, and had not calculated on so close a pursuit. They kept ahead as best they could, and at last reached a narrow river that ran down between cliffs through a gully to the sea. The cliffs on each side were high and bold. But they had to cross it; so down on one side they went, and up the other.

"Clark and Stubbs got up first. Wilson was just reaching the top when the report of a gun was heard, and a bullet struck him in the arm. Groaning in his agony he rushed on trying to keep up with his companions.

"Fortunately for them night came on. They hurried on all night, scarcely knowing where they were going, Wilson in an agony trying to keep up with them. Toward morning they snatched a little rest under a rock near a brook and then hurried forward.

"For two days more they hastened on, keeping out of reach of their pursuers, yet still knowing that they were followed, or at least fearing it. They had gone over a wild country along the coast, and keeping a northward direction. At length, after four days of wandering, they came to a little creek by the sea-shore. There were three houses here belonging to fishermen. They rushed into the first hut and implored food and drink. The men were off to Sydney, but the kind-hearted women gave them what they had. They were terrified at the aspect of these wretch-



"HE TOOK HIS CHARCOAL AND MADE UPON THE WALL THE FOLLOWING MARKS."

ed men, whose natural ferocity had been heightened by hardship, famine, and suffering. Gaunt and grim as they were, they seemed more terrible than three wild beasts. The women knew that they were escaped convicts.

"There was a boat lying on the beach. To this the first thoughts of the fugitives were directed. They filled a cask of water and put it on board. They demanded some provisions from the fisherman's wife. The frightened woman gave them some fish and a few ship-biscuit. They were about to forage for themselves when Wilson, who had been watching, gave the alarm.

"Their pursuers were upon them. They had to run for it at once. They had barely time to rush to the boat and get out a little distance when the guard reached the beach. The latter fired a few shots after them, but the shots took no effect.

"The fugitives put out to sea in the open boat. They headed north, for they hoped to catch some Australian ship and be taken up. Their provisions were soon exhausted. Fortunately it was the rainy season, so that they had a plentiful supply of water, with which they managed to keep their cask filled; but that did not prevent them from suffering the agonies of famine. Clark and Stubbs soon began to look at Wilson with looks that made him quiver with terror. Naturally enough, gentlemen; you see they were starving. Wilson was the weakest of the three, and therefore was at their mercy. They tried, however, to catch fish. It was of no use. There seemed to be no fish in those seas, or else the bits of bread crumb

which they put down were not an attractive bait.

"The two men began to look at Wilson with the eyes of fiends—eyes that flamed with foul desire, beaming from deep, hollow orbits which famine had made. The days passed. One morning Wilson lay dead."

The stranger paused for a moment, amidst an awful silence.

"The lives of these two were preserved a little longer," he added, in slow, measured tones.

"They sailed on. In a few days Clark and Stubbs began to look at one another. You will understand, gentlemen, that it was an awful thing for these men to cast at each other the same glances which they once cast on Wilson. Each one feared the other; each watched his chance, and each guarded against his companion.

"They could no longer row. The one sat in the bow, the other in the stern, glaring at one another. My friend Clark was a man of singular endurance. But why go into particulars? Enough; the boat drifted on, and at last only one was left.

"A ship was sailing from Australia, and the crew saw a boat drifting. A man was there. They stopped and picked him up. The boat was stained with blood. Tokens of what that blood was lay around. There were other things in the boat which chilled the blood of the sailors. They took Clark on board. He was mad at first, and raved in his delirium. They heard him tell of what he had done. During that voyage no one spoke to him. They touched at Cape Town, and put him ashore.

"My friend is yet alive and well. How do you like my story?"

The stranger sat down. A deep stillness followed, which was suddenly broken by something, half groan and half curse. It was Clark.

He lifted himself heavily from his chair, his face livid and his eyes bloodshot, and staggered out of the room.

CHAPTER XLV.

BEATRICE'S JOURNAL CONCLUDED.

September 7, 1849.—[This part begins with a long account of her escape, her fortunes at Holby and London, and her recapture, which is here omitted, as it would be to a large extent a repetition of what has already been stated.]—After Brandon left me my heart still throbbed with the fierce impulse which he had imparted to it. For the remainder of the day I was upheld by a sort of consciousness of his presence. I felt as though he had only left me in person and had surrounded me in some way with his mysterious protection.

Night came, and with the night came gloom. What availed his promise? Could he prevent what I feared? What power could he possibly have in this house? I felt deserted, and my old despair returned.

In the morning I happened to cross the hall to go to Mrs. Compton's room, when, to my amazement, I saw standing outside the Hindu Asgeelo. Had I seen Brandon himself I could scarcely have been more amazed or overjoyed. He looked at me with a warning gesture.

"How did you get here?" I whispered.

"My master sent me."

A thrill passed through my veins.

"Do not fear," he said, and walked mysteriously away.

I asked Mrs. Compton who he was, and she said he was a new servant whom *He* had just hired. She knew nothing more of him.

September 12.—A week has passed. Thus far I have been left alone. Perhaps they do not know what to do with me. Perhaps they are busy arranging some dark plan.

Can I trust? Oh, Help of the helpless, save me!

Asgeelo is here—but what can one man do? At best he can only report to his master my agony or my death. May that Death soon come. Kindly will I welcome him.

September 15.—Things are certainly different here from what they used to be. The servants take pains to put themselves in my way, so as to show me profound respect. What is the meaning of this? Once or twice I have met them in the hall and have marked their humble bearing. Is it mockery? Or is it intended to entrap me? I will not trust any of them. Is it possible that this can be Brandon's mysterious power?

Impossible. It is rather a trick to win my confidence. But if so, why? They do not need to trick me. I am at their mercy.

I am at their mercy, and am without defense. What will become of me? What is to be my fate?

Philips has been as devoted as ever. He leaves me flowers every day. He tries to show sympathy. At least I have two friends here—Philips and Asgeelo. But Philips is timid, and Asgeelo is only one against a crowd. There is Vijal—but I have not seen him.

September 25.—To-day in my closet I found a number of bottles of different kinds of medicine, used while I was sick. Two of these attracted my attention. One was labeled "*Laudanum*," another was labeled "*Hydrocyanic Acid—Poison.*" I suppose they used these drugs for my benefit at that time. The sight of them gave me more joy than any thing else that I could have found.

When the time comes which I dread I shall not be without resource. *These shall save me.*

October 3.—They leave me unmolested. They are waiting for some crushing blow, no doubt. Asgeelo sometimes meets me, and makes signs of encouragement.

To-day Philips met me and said: "Don't fear—the crisis is coming." I asked what he meant. As usual he looked frightened and hurried away.

What does he mean? What crisis? The only crisis that I can think of is one which fills me with dread. When that comes I will meet it firmly.

October 10.—Mrs. Compton told me to-day that Philips had gone to London on business. The poor old thing looked very much troubled. I urged her to tell me what was the matter, but she only looked the more terrified. Why she should feel alarm about the departure of Philips for London I can not imagine. Has it any thing to do with me? No. How can it? My fate, whatever it is, must be wrought out here in this place.

October 14.—The dreaded crisis has come at last. Will not this be my last entry? How can I longer avoid the fate that impends?

This afternoon He sent for me to come down.

I went to the dining-room expecting some horror, and I was not disappointed. The three were sitting there as they had sat before, and I thought that there was trouble upon their faces. It was only two o'clock, and they had just finished lunch.

John was the first to speak. He addressed me in a mocking tone.

"I have the honor to inform you," said he, "that the time has arrived when you are to be took down."

I paid no attention whatever to these words. I felt calm. The old sense of superiority came over me, and I looked at Him without a tremor.

My tyrant glanced at me with a dark scowl. "After your behavior, girl, you ought to bless your lucky stars that you got off as you did. If I had done right, I'd have made you pay up well for the trouble you've given. But I've spared you. At the same time I wouldn't have done so long. I was just arranging a nice little plan for your benefit when this gentleman"—nodding his head to Clark—"this gentleman saved me the trouble."

I said nothing.

"Come, Clark, speak up—it's your affair—"

"Oh, you manage it," said Clark. "You've got the 'gift of gab.' I never had it."

"I never in all my born days saw so bold a man as timid with a girl as you are."

"He's doin' what I shouldn't like to try on," said John.

"See here," said my tyrant, sternly, "this gentleman has very kindly consented to take charge of you. He has even gone so far as to consent to marry you. He will actually make you his wife. In my opinion he's crazy, but he's got his own ideas. He has promised to give you a tip-top wedding. If it had been left to me," he went on, sternly, "I'd have let you have something very different, but he's a soft-hearted fellow, and is going to do a foolish thing. It's lucky for you though. You'd have had a precious hard time of it with me, I tell you. You've got to be grateful to him; so come up here, and give him a kiss, and thank him."

So prepared was I for any horror that this did not surprise me.

"Do you hear?" he cried, as I stood motionless. I said nothing.

"Do as I say, d—n you, or I'll make you."

"Come," said Clark, "don't make a fuss about the wench now—it 'll be all right. She'll like kissing well enough, and be only too glad to give me one before a week."

"Yes, but she ought to be made to do it now."

"Not nepessary, Johnnie; all in good time."

My master was silent for some moments. At last he spoke again:

"Girl," said he. "You are to be married tomorrow. There won't be any invited guests, but you needn't mind that. You'll have your husband, and that's more than you deserve. You don't want any new dresses. Your ball dress will do."

"Come, I won't stand that," said Clark. "She's got to be dressed up in tip-top style. I'll stand the damage."

"Oh, d—n the damage. If you want that sort of thing, it shall be done. But there won't be time."

"Oh well, let her fix up the best way she can."

At this I turned and left the room. None of them tried to prevent me. I went up to my chamber, and sat down thinking. The hour had come.

This is my last entry. My only refuge from horror unspeakable is the Poison.

Perhaps one day some one will find my journal where it is concealed. Let them learn from it what anguish may be endured by the innocent.

May God have mercy upon my soul! Amen.

October 14, 11 *o'clock.*—Hope!

Mrs. Compton came to me a few minutes since. She had received a letter from Philips by Asgeelo. She said the Hindu wished to see me. He was at my door. I went there. He told me that I was to fly from Brandon Hall at two o'clock in the morning. He would take care of me. Mrs. Compton said she was to go with me. A place had been found where we could get shelter.

Oh my God, I thank thee! Already when I heard this I was mixing the draught. Two o'clock was the hour on which I had decided for a different kind of flight.

Oh God! deliver the captive. Save me, as I put my trust in thee! Amen.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE LAST ESCAPE.

THE hour which Beatrice had mentioned in her diary was awaited by her with feverish impatience. She had confidence in Asgeelo, and this confidence was heightened by the fact that Mrs. Compton was going to accompany her. The very timidity of this poor old creature would have prevented her from thinking of escape on any ordinary occasion; but now the latter showed no fear. She evinced a strange exultation. She showed Philips's letter to Beatrice, and made her read it over and over again. It contained only a few words.

"The time has come at last. I will keep my word to you, dear old woman. Be ready tonight to leave Brandon Hall and those devils forever. The Hindu will help you.

"EDGAR."

Mrs. Compton seemed to think far more of the letter than of escaping. The fact that she had a letter seemed to absorb all her faculties, and no other idea entered her mind. Beatrice had but few preparations to make; a small parcel contained all with which she dared to encumber herself. Hastily making it up she waited in extreme impatience for the time.

At last two o'clock came. Mrs. Compton was in her room. There was a faint tap at the door. Beatrice opened it. It was Asgeelo. The Hindu stood with his finger on his lips, and then moved away slowly and stealthily. They followed.

The Hindu led the way, carrying a small lantern. He did not show any very great caution, but moved with a quiet step, thinking it sufficient if he made no noise. Beatrice followed, and Mrs. Compton came last, carrying nothing but the note from Philips, which she clutched in her hand as though she esteemed it the only thing of value which she possessed.

"THE GIGANTIC H
HIS

In spite of Beatr
she felt her heart sin
through the hall an
But no sound disturb
all out, and the house
dining-room was open
Asgeelo led the wa
went on quietly withe
last reached it. Asg
the door half open
turned and whispered
Beatrice took two
suddenly a dark figu
way that led to the se
den spring advanced
The latter dropped

"THE GIGANTIC FIGURE OF ASGEELO STOOD ERECT, ONE ARM CLUTCHING THE THROAT OF HIS ASSAILANT, AND THE OTHER HOLDING THE KNIFE ALOFT."

In spite of Beatrice's confidence in Asgeelo she felt her heart sink with dread as she passed through the hall and down the great stairway. But no sound disturbed them. The lights were all out, and the house was still. The door of the dining-room was open, but no light shone through.

Asgeelo led the way to the north door. They went on quietly without any interruption, and at last reached it. Asgeelo turned the key and held the door half open for a moment. Then he turned and whispered to them to go out.

Beatrice took two or three steps forward, when suddenly a dark figure emerged from the stairway that led to the servants' hall and with a sudden spring advanced to Asgeelo.

The latter dropped the lamp, which fell with a rattle on the floor but still continued burning. He drew a long, keen knife from his breast, and seized the other by the throat.

Beatrice started back. By the light that flickered on the floor she saw it all. The gigantic figure of Asgeelo stood erect, one arm clutching the throat of his assailant, and the other holding the knife aloft.

Beatrice rushed forward and caught the uplifted arm.

"Spare him!" she said, in a low whisper. "He is my friend. He helped me to escape once before."

She had recognized Vijal.

The Hindu dropped his arm and released his hold. The Malay staggered back and looked

earnestly at Beatrice. Recognizing her, he fell on his knees and kissed her hand.

"I will keep your secret," he murmured.

Beatrice hurried out, and the others followed. They heard the key turn in the door after them. Vijal had locked it from the inside.

Asgeelo led the way with a swift step. They went down the main avenue, and at length reached the gate without any interruption. The gates were shut.

Beatrice looked around in some dread for fear of being discovered. Asgeelo said nothing, but tapped at the door of the porter's lodge. The door soon opened, and the porter came out. He said nothing, but opened the gates in silence.

They went out. The huge gates shut behind them. They heard the key turn in the lock. In her excitement Beatrice wondered at this, and saw that the porter must also be in the secret. Was this the work of Brandon?

They passed down the road a little distance, and at length reached a place where there were two coaches and some men.

One of these came up and took Mrs. Compton. "Come, old woman," said he; "you and I are to go in this coach." It was too dark to see who it was; but the voice sounded like that of Philips. He led her into the coach and jumped in after her.

There was another figure there. He advanced in silence, and motioned to the coach without a word. Beatrice followed; the coach door was opened, and she entered. Asgeelo mounted the box. The stranger entered the coach and shut the door.

Beatrice had not seen the face of this man; but at the sight of the outline of his figure a strange, wild thought came to her mind. As he seated himself by her side a thrill passed through every nerve. Not a word was spoken.

He reached out one hand, and caught hers in a close and fervid clasp. He threw his arm about her waist, and drew her toward him. Her head sank in a delicious languor upon his breast; and she felt the fast throbbing of his heart as she lay there. He held her pressed closely for a long while, drawing quick and heavy breaths, and not speaking a word. Then he smoothed her brow, stroked her hair, and caressed her cheek. Every touch of his made her blood tingle.

"Do you know who I am?" said at last a well-known voice.

She made no answer, but pressed his hand and nestled more closely to his heart.

The carriages rushed on swiftly. They went through the village, passed the inn, and soon entered the open country. Beatrice, in that moment of ecstasy, knew not and cared not whither they were going. Enough that she was with him.

"You have saved me from a fate of horror," said she, tremulously; "or rather, you have prevented me from saving myself."

"How could you have saved yourself?"

"I found poison."

She felt the shudder that passed through his frame. He pressed her again to his heart, and sat for a long time in silence.

"How had you the heart to let me go back when you could get me away so easily?" said she, after a time, in a reproachful tone.

"I could not save you then," answered he, "without open violence. I wished to defer that for the accomplishment of a purpose which you know. But I secured your safety, for all the servants at Brandon Hall are in my pay."

"What! Vijal too?"

"No, not Vijal; he was incorruptible; but all the others. They would have obeyed your slightest wish in any respect. They would have shed their blood for you, for the simple reason that I had promised to pay each man an enormous sum if he saved you from any trouble. They were all on the look out. You never were so watched in your life. If you had chosen to run off every man of them would have helped you, and would have rejoiced at the chance of making themselves rich at the expense of Potts. Under these circumstances I thought you were safe."

"And why did you not tell me?"

"Ah! love, there are many things which I must not tell you."

He sighed. His sombre tone brought back her senses which had been wandering. She struggled to get away. He would not release her.

"Let me go!" said she. "I am of the accursed brood—the impure ones! You are polluted by my touch!"

"I will not let you go," returned he, in a tone of infinite sweetness. "Not now. This may be our last interview. How can I let you go?"

"I am pollution,"

"You are angelic. Oh, let us not think of other things. Let us banish from our minds the thought of that barrier which rises between us. While we are here let us forget every thing except that we love one another. To-morrow will come, and our joy will be at an end forever. But you, darling, will be saved! I will guard you to my life's end, even though I can not come near you."

Tears fell from Beatrice's eyes. He felt them hot upon his hand. He sighed deeply.

"I am of the accursed brood!—the accursed!—the accursed! You dishonor your name by touching me."

Brandon clung to her. He would not let her go. She wept there upon his breast, and still murmured the words, "Accursed! accursed!"

Their carriage rolled on; behind them came the other; on for mile after mile, round the bays and creeks of the sea, until at last they reached a village.

"This is our destination," said Brandon.

"Where are we?" sighed Beatrice.

"It is Denton," he replied.

The coach stopped before a little cottage. Asgeelo opened the door. Brandon pressed Beatrice to his heart.

"For the last time, darling," he murmured.

She said nothing. He helped her out, catching her in his arms as she descended, and lifting her to the ground. Mrs. Compton was already waiting, having descended first. Lights were burning in the cottage window.

"This is your home for the present," said Brandon. "Here you are safe. You will find every thing that you want, and the servants are faithful. You may trust them."

He shook hands with Mrs. Compton, pressed the hand of Beatrice, and leaped into the coach.

"Good-by," he called, as Asgeelo whipped the horses.

"Good-by forever," murmured Beatrice through her tears.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ROUSED AT LAST.

About this time Despard received a call from Langhetti. "I am going away," said the latter, after the preliminary greetings. "I am well enough now to resume my search after Beatrice."

"Beatrice?"

"Yes."

"What can you do?"

"I haven't an idea; but I mean to try to do something."

Langhetti certainly did not look like a man who was capable of doing very much, especially against one like Potts. Thin, pale, fragile, and emaciated, his slender form seemed ready to yield to the pressure of the first fatigue which he might encounter. Yet his resolution was strong, and he spoke confidently of being able in some mysterious way to effect the escape of Beatrice. He had no idea how he could do it. He had exerted his strongest influence, and had come away discomfited. Still he had confidence in himself and trust in God, and with these he determined to set out once more, and to succeed or perish in the attempt.

After he had left Despard sat moodily in his study for some hours. At last a visitor was announced. He was a man whom Despard had never seen before, and who gave his name as Wheeler.

The stranger on entering regarded Despard for some time with an earnest glance in silence. At last he spoke:

"You are the son of Lionel Despard, are you not?"

"Yes," said Despard, in some surprise.

"Excuse me for alluding to so sad an event; but you are, of course, aware of the common story of his death."

"Yes," replied Despard, in still greater surprise.

"That story is known to the world," said the stranger. "His case was publicly tried at Manilla, and a Malay was executed for the crime."

"I know that," returned Despard, "and I know, also, that there were some, and that there still are some, who suspect that the Malay was innocent."

"Who suspected this?"

"My uncle Henry Despard and myself."

"Will you allow me to ask you if your suspicions pointed at any one?"

"My uncle hinted at one person, but he had nothing more than suspicions."

"Who was the man?"

"A man who was my father's valet, or agent, who accompanied him on that voyage, and took an active part in the conviction of the Malay."

"What was his name?"

"John Potts."

"Where does he live now?"

"In Brandon."

"Very well. Excuse my questions, but I was anxious to learn how much you knew. You will see shortly that they were not idle. Has any thing ever been done by any of the relatives to discover whether these suspicions were correct?"

"At first nothing was done. They accepted as an established fact the decision of the Manilla court. They did not even suspect then that any thing else was possible. It was only subsequent circumstances that led my uncle to have some vague suspicions."

"What were those, may I ask?"

"I would rather not tell," said Despard, who shrank from relating to a stranger the mysterious story of Edith Brandon.

"It is as well, perhaps. At any rate, you say there were no suspicions expressed till your uncle was led to form them?"

"No."

"About how long ago was this?"

"About two years ago—a little more, perhaps. I at once devoted myself to the task of discovering whether they could be maintained. I found it impossible, however, to learn any thing. The event had happened so long ago that it had faded out of men's minds. The person whom I suspected had become very rich, influential, and respected. In fact, he was unassailable, and I have been compelled to give up the effort."

"Would you like to learn something of the truth?" asked the stranger, in a thrilling voice.

Despard's whole soul was roused by this question.

"More than any thing else," replied he.

"There is a sand-bank," began the stranger, "three hundred miles south of the island of Java, which goes by the name of Coffin Island. It is so called on account of a rock of peculiar shape at the eastern extremity. I was coming from the East, on my way to England, when a violent storm arose, and I was cast ashore alone upon that island. This may seem extraordinary to you, but what I have to tell is still more extraordinary. I found food and water there, and lived for some time. At last another hurricane came and blew away all the sand from a mound at the western end. This mound had been piled about a wrecked vessel—a vessel wrecked twenty years ago, twenty years ago," he repeated, with startling emphasis, "and the name of that vessel was the *Vishnu*."

"The *Vishnu!*" cried Despard, starting to his feet, while his whole frame was shaken by emotion at this strange narrative. "The *Vishnu!*"

"Yes, the *Vishnu!*" continued the stranger. "You know what that means. For many years that vessel had lain there, entombed amidst the sands, until at last I—on that lonely isle—saw the sands swept away and the buried ship revealed. I went on board. I entered the cabin. I passed through it. At last I entered a room at one corner. A skeleton lay there. Do you know whose it was?"

"Whose?" cried Despard, in a frenzy of excitement.

"*Your father's!*" said the stranger, in an awful voice.

"God in heaven!" exclaimed Despard, and he sank back into his seat.

"In his hand he held a manuscript, which was his last message to his friends. It was inclosed in a bottle. The storm had prevented him from throwing it overboard. He held it there as though waiting for some one to take it. I was the one appointed to that task. I took it. I read it, and now that I have arrived in England I have brought it to you."

"Where is it?" cried Despard, in wild excitement.

"Here," said the stranger, and he laid a package upon the table.

Despard seized it, and tore open the coverings. At the first sight he recognized the handwriting of his father, familiar to him from old letters written to him when he was a child—letters which he had always preserved, and every turn of which was impressed upon his memory. The first glance was sufficient to impress upon his mind the conviction that the stranger's tale was true.

Without another word he began to read it. And as he read all his soul became associated with that lonely man, drifting in his drifting ship. There he read the villainy of the miscreant who had compassed his death, and the despair of the castaway.

That suffering man was his own father. It was this that gave intensity to his thoughts as he read. The dying man bequeathed his vengeance to Ralph Brandon, and his blessing to his son.

Despard read over the manuscript many times. It was his father's words to himself.

"I am in haste," said the stranger. "The manuscript is yours. I have made inquiries for Ralph Brandon, and find that he is dead. It is for you to do as seems good. You are a clergyman, but you are also a man; and a father's wrongs cry to Heaven for vengeance."

"And they shall be avenged!" exclaimed Despard, striking his clenched hand upon the table.

"I have something more before I go," continued the stranger, mournfully—"something which you will prize more than life. It was worn next your father's heart till he died. I found it there."

Saying this he handed to Despard a miniature, painted on enamel, representing a beautiful woman, whose features were like his own.

"My mother!" cried Despard, passionately, and he covered the miniature with kisses.

"I buried your father," said the stranger, after a long pause. "His remains now lie on Coffin Island, in their last resting-place."

"And who are you? What are you? How did you find me out? What is your object?" cried Despard, eagerly.

"I am Mr. Wheeler," said the stranger, calmly; "and I come to give you these things in order to fulfill my duty to the dead. It remains for you to fulfill yours."

"That duty shall be fulfilled!" exclaimed Despard. "The law does not help me: I will help myself. I know some of these men at least. I will do the duty of a son."

The stranger bowed and withdrew.

Despard paced the room for hours. A fierce thirst for vengeance had taken possession of him. Again and again he read the manuscript, and after each reading his vengeful feeling became stronger.

At last he had a purpose. He was no longer the imbecile—the crushed—the hopeless. In the full knowledge of his father's misery his own became endurable.

In the morning he saw Langhetti and told him all.

"But who is the stranger?" Despard asked in wonder.

"It can only be one person," said Langhetti, solemnly.

"Who?"

"Louis Brandon. He and no other. Who else could thus have been chosen to find the dead? He has his wrongs also to avenge."

Despard was silent. Overwhelming thoughts crowded upon him. Was this man Louis Brandon?

"We must find him," said he. "We must gain his help in our work. We must also tell him about Edith."

"Yes," replied Langhetti. "But no doubt he has his own work before him; and this is but part of his plan, to rouse you from inaction to vengeance."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WHO IS HE?

On the morning after the last escape of Beatrice, Clark went up to Brandon Hall. It was about nine o'clock. A sullen frown was on his face, which was pervaded by an expression of savage malignity. A deeply preoccupied look, as though he were altogether absorbed in his own thoughts, prevented him from noticing the half-smiles which the servants cast at one another.

Asgeelo opened the door. That valuable servant was at his post as usual. Clark brushed past him with a growl and entered the dining-room.

Potts was standing in front of the fire with a flushed face and savage eyes. John was stroking his dog, and appeared quite indifferent. Clark, however, was too much taken up with his own thoughts to notice Potts. He came in and sat down in silence.

"Well," said Potts, "did you do that business?"

"No," growled Clark.

"No!" cried Potts. "Do you mean to say you didn't follow up the fellow?"

"I mean to say it's no go," returned Clark. "I did what I could. But when you are after a man, and he turns out to be the DEVIL HIMSELF, what can you do?"

At these words, which were spoken with unusual excitement, John gave a low laugh, but said nothing.

"You've been getting rather soft lately, it seems to me," said Potts. "At any rate, what did you do?"

"Well," said Clark, slowly—"I went to that inn—to watch the fellow. He was sitting by the fire, taking it very easy. I tried to make out whether I had ever seen him before, but could not. He sat by the fire, and wouldn't say a word. I tried to trot him out, and at last I did so. He trotted out in good earnest, and if any man was ever kicked at and ridden rough-shod over, I'm that individual. He isn't a man—he's Beelzebub. He knows every thing. He began in a playful way by taking a piece of charcoal and writing on the wall some marks which belong to me, and which I'm a little delicate about letting people see; in fact, the Botany Bay marks."

"Did he know that?" cried Potts, aghast.

"Not only knew it, but, as I was saying, marked it on the wall. That's a sign of knowledge. And for fear they wouldn't be understood, he kindly explained to about a dozen people present the particular meaning of each."

"The devil!" said John.

"That's what I said he was," rejoined Clark, dryly. "But that's nothing. I remember when I was a little boy," he continued, pensively, "hearing the parson read about some handwriting on the wall, that frightened Beelzebub himself; but I tell you this handwriting on the wall used me up a good deal more than that other. Still what followed was worse."

Clark paused for a little while, and then, taking a long breath, went on.

"He proceeded to give to the assembled company an account of my life, particularly that very interesting part of it which I passed on my last visit to Botany Bay. You know my escape."

He stopped for a while.

"Did he know about that, too?" asked Potts, with some agitation.

"Johnnie," said Clark, "he knew a precious sight more than I do, and told some things which I had [illegible] myself. Why, that devil stood up there and slowly told the company not only what I did but what I felt. He brought it all back. He told how I looked at Stubbs, and how Stubbs looked at me in the boat. He told how we sat looking at each other, each in our own end of the boat."

Clark stopped again, and no one spoke for a long time.

"I lost my breath and ran out," he resumed, "and was afraid to go back. I did so at last. It was then almost midnight. I found him still sitting there. He smiled at me in a way that fairly made my blood run cold. 'Crocker,' said he, 'sit down.'"

At this Potts and John looked at each other in horror.

"He knows that too?" said John.

"Every thing," returned Clark, dejectedly. "Well, when he said that I looked a little surprised, as you may be sure.

"'I thought you'd be back,' said he, 'for you want to see me, you know. You're going to follow me,' says he. 'You've got your pistols all ready, so, as I always like to oblige a friend, I'll give you a chance. Come.'

"At this I fairly staggered.

"'Come,' says he, 'I've got all that money, and Potts wants it back. And you're going to get it from me. Come.'

"I swear to you I could not move. He smiled at me as before, and quietly got up and left the house. I stood for some time fixed to the spot. At last I grew reckless. 'If he's the devil himself,' says I, 'I'll have it out with him.' I rushed out and followed in his pursuit. After some time I overtook him. He was on horseback, but his horse was walking. He heard me coming. 'Ah, Crocker,' said he, quite merrily, 'so you've come, have you?'

"I tore my pistol from my pocket and fired. The only reply was a loud laugh. He went on without turning his head. I was now sure that it was the devil, but I fired my other pistol. He gave a tremendous laugh, turned his horse, and rode full at me. His horse seemed as large as the village church. Every thing swam around, and I fell headforemost on the ground. I believe I lay there all night. When I came to it was morning, and I hurried straight here."

As he ended Clark arose, and, going to the sideboard, poured out a large glass of brandy, which he drank raw.

"The fact is," said John, after long thought, "you've been tricked. This fellow has doctored your pistols and frightened you."

"But I loaded them myself," replied Clark.

"When?"

"Oh, I always keep them loaded in my room. I tried them, and found the charge was in them."

"Oh, somebody's fixed them."

"I don't think half as much about the pistols as about what he told me. What devil could have put all that into his head? Answer me that," said Clark.

"Somebody's at work around us," said John. "I feel it in my bones."

"We're getting used up," said Potts. "The girl's gone again."

"The girl! Gone!"

"Yes, and Mrs. Compton too."

"The devil!"

"I'd rather lose the girl than Mrs. Compton; but when they both vanish the same night what are you to think?"

"I think the devil is loose."

"I'm afraid he's turned against us," said Potts, in a regretful tone. "He's got tired of helping us."

"Do none of the servants know any thing about it?"

"No—none of them."

"Have you asked them all?"

"Yes."

"Doesn't that new servant, the Injin?"

"No; they all went to bed at twelve. Vijal was up as late as two. They all swear that every thing was quiet."

"Did they go out through the doors?"

"The doors were all locked as usual."

"There's treachery somewhere!" cried John, with more excitement than usual.

The others were silent.

"I believe that the girl's at the bottom of it all," said John. "We've been trying to take her down ever since she came, but it's my belief that we'll end by getting took down ourselves. I was against her being sent for from the first. I scented bad luck in her at the other side of the world. We've been acting like fools. We ought to have silenced her at first."

"No," rejoined Potts, gloomily. "There's somebody at work deeper than she is. Somebody—but who?—who?"

"Nobody but the devil," said Clark, firmly.

"I've been thinking about that Italian," continued Potts. "He's the only man living that would bother his head about the girl. They know a good deal between them. I think he's managed some of this last business. He's humbugged us. It isn't the devil; it's this Italian. We must look out; he'll be around here again perhaps."

Clark's eyes brightened.

"The next time," said he, "I'll load my pistols fresh, and then see if he'll escape me!"

At this a noise was heard in the hall. Potts went out. The servants had been scouring the grounds as before, but with no result.

"No use," said John. "I tried it with my dog. He went straight down through the gate, and a little distance outside the scent was lost. I tried him with Mrs. Compton too. They both

went together, and of course had horses or carriages there."

"What does the porter say?" asked Clark.

"He swears that he was up till two, and then went to bed, and that nobody was near the gate."

"Well, we can't do any thing," said Potts; "but I'll send some of the servants off to see what they can hear. The scent was lost so soon that we can't tell what direction they took."

"You'll never get her again," said John; "she's gone for good this time."

Potts swore a deep oath and relapsed into silence. After a time they all went down to the bank.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE RUN ON THE BANK.

Not long after the bank opened a number of people came in who asked for gold in return for some bank-notes which they offered. This was an unusual circumstance. The people also were strangers. Potts wondered what it could mean. There was no help for it, however. The gold was paid out, and Potts and his friends began to feel somewhat alarmed at the thought which now presented itself for the first time that their very large circulation of notes might be returned upon them. He communicated this fear to Clark.

"How much gold have you?"

"Very little."

"How much?"

"Thirty thousand."

"Phew!" said Clark, "and nearly two hundred thousand out in notes!"

Potts was silent.

"What 'll you do if there is a run on the bank?"

"Oh, there won't be."

"Why not?"

"My credit is too good."

"Your credit won't be worth a rush if people know this."

While they talked persons kept dropping in. Most of the villagers and people of the neighborhood brought back the notes, demanding gold. By about twelve o'clock the influx was constant.

Potts began to feel alarmed. He went out, and tried to bully some of the villagers. They did not seem to pay any attention to him, however. Potts went back to his parlor discomfited, vowing vengeance against those who had thus slighted him. The worst of these was the tailor, who brought in notes to the extent of a thousand pounds, and when Potts ordered him out and told him to wait, only laughed in his face.

"Haven't you got gold enough?" said the tailor, with a sneer. "Are you afraid of the bank? Well, old Potts, so am I."

At this there was a general laugh among the people.

The bank clerks did not at all sympathize with the bank. They were too eager to pay out. Potts had to check them. He called them in his parlor, and ordered them to pay out more slowly. They all declared that they couldn't.

The day dragged on till at last three o'clock came. Fifteen thousand pounds had been paid out. Potts fell into deep despondency. Clark had remained throughout the whole morning.

"There's going to be a run on the bank?" said he. "It's only begun."

Potts's sole answer was a curse.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"You'll have to help me," replied Potts. "You've got something."

"I've got fifty thousand pounds in the Plymouth Bank."

"You'll have to let me have it."

Clark hesitated.

"I don't know," said he.

"D—n it, man, I'll give you any security you wish. I've got more security than I know what to do with."

"Well," said Clark, "I don't know. There's a risk."

"I only want it for a few days. I'll send down stock to my London broker and have it sold. It will give me hundreds of thousands—twice as much as all the bank issue. Then I'll pay up these devils well, and that d—d tailor worst of all. I swear I'll send it all down to-day, and have every bit of it sold. If there's going to be a run, I'll be ready for them."

"How much have you?"

"I'll send it all down—though I'm devilish sorry," continued Potts. "How much? why, see here;" and he pencilled down the following figures on a piece of paper, which he showed to Clark:

California Company	£100,000
Mexican bonds	50,000
Guatemala do.	50,000
Venezuela do.	50,000
	£250,000

"What do you think of that, my boy?" said Potts.

"Well," returned Clark, cautiously, "I don't like them American names."

"Why," said Potts, "the stock is at a premium. I've been getting from twenty to twenty-five per cent. dividends. They'll sell for three hundred thousand nearly. I'll sell them all. I'll sell them all," he cried. "I'll have gold enough to put a stop to this sort of thing forever."

"I thought you had some French and Russian bonds," said Clark.

"I gave those to that devil who had the—the papers, you know. He consented to take them, and I was very glad, for they paid less than the others."

Clark was silent.

"Why, man, what are you thinking about? Don't you know that I'm good for two millions, what with my estate and my stock?"

"But you owe an infernal lot."

"And haven't I notes and other securities from every body?"

"Yes, from every body; but how can you get hold of them?"

"The first people of the county!"

"And as poor as rats."

"London merchants!"

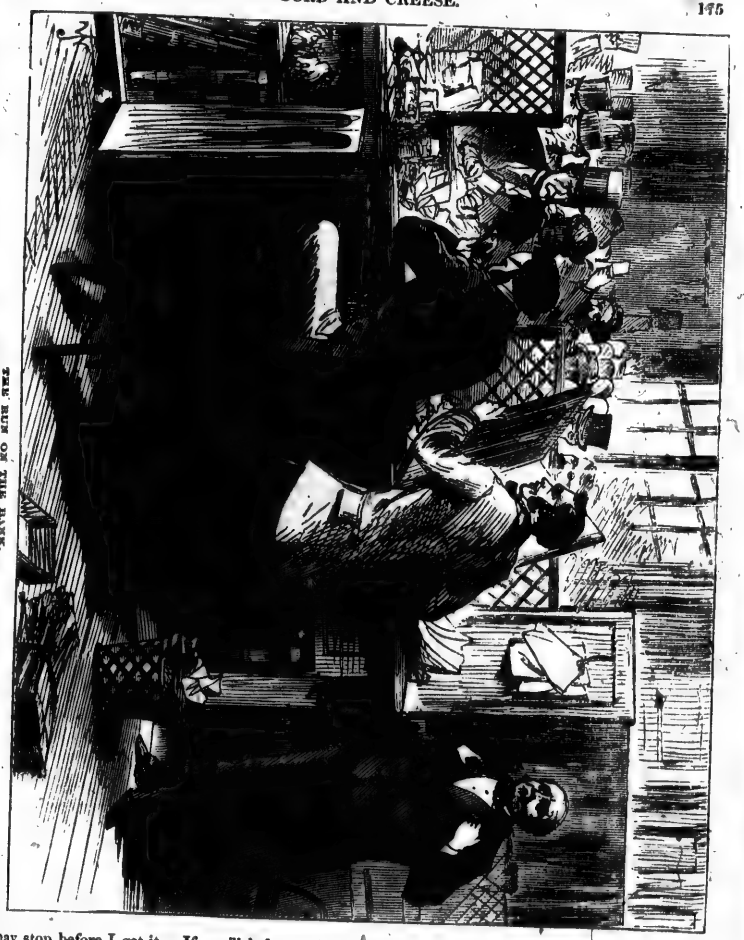
"Who are they? How can you get back your money?"

"Smithers & Co. will let me have what I want."

"If Smithers & Co. knew the present state of affairs I rather think that they'd back down."

"Pooh! What! Back down from a man with my means! Nonsense! They know how rich I am, or they never would have begun. Come, don't be a fool. It 'll take three days to get gold for my stock, and if you don't help me the bank

may stop before I
three days I'll pay
"How much wil
"I'll give ten t
don't mind."
"Done. Give
sand pounds, and I
sand for three days.
"All right. Yo
short; but I don't
money?"
"The day after
outh now, get the m
use it the next day."
"All right; I'll
with the stock, and
once."
Clark started off



THE RUN ON THE BANK.

may stop before I get it. If you'll help me for three days I'll pay you well."

"How much will you give?"

"I'll give ten thousand pounds—there! I don't mind."

"Done. Give me your note for sixty thousand pounds, and I'll let you have the fifty thousand for three days."

"All right. You've got me where my hair is short; but I don't mind. When can I have the money?"

"The day after to-morrow. I'll go to Plymouth now, get the money to-morrow, and you can use it the next day."

"All right; I'll send down John to London with the stock, and he'll bring up the gold at once."

Clark started off immediately for Plymouth, and not long after John went away to London. Potts remained to await the storm which he dreaded.

The next day came. The bank opened late on purpose. Potts put up a notice that it was to be closed that day at twelve, on account of the absence of some of the directors.

At about eleven the crowd of people began to make their appearance as before. Their demands were somewhat larger than on the previous day. Before twelve ten thousand pounds had been paid. At twelve the bank was shut in the faces of the clamorous people, in accordance with the notice.

Strangers were there from all parts of the county. The village inn was crowded, and a large number of carriages was outside. Potts began to look forward to the next day with deep

anxiety. Only five thousand pounds remained in the bank. One man had come with notes to the extent of five thousand, and had only been got rid of by the shutting of the bank. He left, vowing vengeance.

To Potts's immense relief Clark made his appearance early on the following day. He had brought the money. Potts gave him his note for sixty thousand pounds, and the third day began.

By ten o'clock the doors were besieged by the largest crowd that had ever assembled in this quiet village. Another host of lookers-on had collected. When the doors were opened they poured in with a rush.

The demands on this third day were very large. The man with the five thousand had fought his way to the counter first, and clamored to be paid. The noise and confusion were overpowering. Every body was cursing the bank or laughing at it. Each one felt doubtful about getting his pay. Potts tried to be dignified for a time. He ordered them to be quiet, and assured them that they would all be paid. His voice was drowned in the wild uproar. The clerks counted out the gold as rapidly as possible, in spite of the remonstrances of Potts, who on three occasions called them all into the parlor, and threatened to dismiss them unless they counted more slowly. His threats were disregarded. They went back, and paid out as rapidly as before. The amounts required ranged from five or ten pounds to thousands of pounds. At last, after paying out thousands, one man came up who had notes to the amount of ten thousand pounds. This was the largest demand that had yet been made. It was doubtful whether there was so large an amount left. Potts came out to see him. There was no help for it; he had to parley with the enemy.

He told him that it was within a few minutes of three, and that it would take an hour at least to count out so much—would he not wait till the next day? There would be ample time then.

The man had no objection. It was all the same to him. He went out with his bundle of notes through the crowd, telling them that the bank could not pay him. This intelligence made the excitement still greater. There was a fierce rush to the counter. The clerks worked hard, and paid out what they could in spite of the hints and even the threats of Potts, till at length the bank clock struck the hour of three. It had been put forward twenty minutes, and there was a great riot among the people on that account, but they could not do any thing. The bank was closed for the day, and they had to depart.

Both Potts and Clark now waited eagerly for the return of John. He was expected before the next day. He ought to be in by midnight. After waiting impatiently for hours they at length drove out to see if they could find him.

About twelve miles from Brandon they met him at midnight with a team of horses and a number of men, all of whom were armed.

"Have you got it?"

"Yes," said John, "what there is of it."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I'm too tired to explain. Wait till we get home."

It was four o'clock in the morning before they reached the bank. The gold was taken out and deposited in the vaults, and the three went up to the Hall. They brought out brandy and refreshed themselves, after which John remarked, in his usual laconic style,

"You've been and gone and done it."

"What?" asked Potts, somewhat puzzled.

"With your speculations in stocks."

"What about them?"

"Nothing," said John, "only they happen to be at a small discount."

"A discount?"

"Slightly."

Potts was silent.

"How much?" asked Clark.

"I have a statement here," said John. "When I got to London, I saw the broker. He said that American stocks, particularly those which I held, had undergone a great depreciation. He assured me that it was only temporary, that the dividends which these stocks paid were enough to raise them in a short time, perhaps in a few weeks, and that it was madness to sell out now. He declared that it would ruin the credit of the Brandon Bank if it were known that we sold out at such a fearful sacrifice, and advised me to raise the money at a less cost.

"Well, I could only think of Smithers & Co. I went to their office. They were all away. I saw one of the clerks who said they had gone to see about some Russian loan or other, so there was nothing to do but to go back to the broker. He assured me again that it was an unheard of sacrifice; that these very stocks which I held had fallen terribly, he knew not how, and advised me to do any thing rather than make such a sacrifice. But I could do nothing. Gold was what I wanted, and since Smithers & Co. were away this was the only way to get it."

"Well!" cried Potts, eagerly. "Did you get it?"

"You saw that I got it. I sold out at a cost that is next to ruin."

"What is it?"

"Well," said John, "I will give you the statement of the broker," and he drew from his pocket a paper which he handed to the others. They looked at it eagerly.

It was as follows:

100 shares California @ £1000 each. 65 per cent. discount	£35 600
50 shares Mexican. 75 per cent. discount	12,500
50 shares Guatemala. 80 per cent. discount	10,000
50 shares Venezuela. 80 per cent. discount	10,000
	£67,000

The faces of Potts and Clark grew black as night as they read this. A deep execration burst from Potts. Clark leaned back in his chair.

"The bank's blown up!" said he.

"No, it ain't," rejoined Potts.

"Why not?"

"There's gold enough to pay all that's likely to be offered."

"How much more do you think will be offered?"

"Not much; it stands to reason."

"It stands to reason that every note which you've issued will be sent back to you. So I'll trouble you to give me my sixty thousand; and I advise you as a friend to hold on to the rest."

"Clark!" said Potts, "you're getting timider and timider. You ain't got any more pluck these times than a kitten."

"It's a time when a man's got to be careful of his earnings," said Clark. "How much have

you out in notes? You told me once you had out about £180,000, perhaps more. Well, you've already had to redeem about £75,000. That leaves £105,000 yet, and you've only got £67,000 to pay it with. What have you got to say to that?"

"Well!" said Potts. "The Brandon Bank may go—but what then? You forget that I have the Brandon estate. That's worth two millions."

"You got it for two hundred thousand."

"Because it was thrown away, and dropped into my hands."

"It'll be thrown away again at this rate. You owe Smithers & Co."

"Pooh! that's all offset by securities which I hold."

"Queer securities!"

"All good," said Potts. "All first-rate. It'll be all right. We'll have to put it through."

"But, what if it isn't all right?" asked Clark, savagely.

"You forget that I have Smithers & Co. to fall back on."

"If your bank breaks, there is an end of Smithers & Co."

"Oh no. I've got this estate to fall back on, and they know it. I can easily explain to them. If they had only been in town I shouldn't have had to make this sacrifice. You needn't feel troubled about your money. I'll give you security on the estate to any amount. I'll give you security for seventy thousand," said Potts.

Clark thought for a while.

"Well!" said he, "it's a risk, but I'll run it."

"There isn't time to get a lawyer now to make out the papers; but whenever you fetch one I'll do it."

"I'll get one to-day, and you'll sign the papers this evening. In my opinion by that time the bank 'll be shut up for good, and you're a fool for your pains. You're simply throwing away what gold you have."

Potts went down not long after. It was the fourth day of the run. Miscellaneous callers thronged the place, but the amounts were not large. In two hours not more than five thousand were paid out.

At length a man came in with a carpet-bag. He pulled out a vast quantity of notes.

"How much?" asked the clerk, blandly.

"Thirty thousand pounds," said the man

Potts heard this and came out.

"How much?" he asked.

"Thirty thousand pounds."

"Do you want it in gold?"

"Of course."

"Will you take a draft on Messrs. Smithers & Co.?"

"No, I want gold."

While Potts was talking to this man another was waiting patiently beside him. Of course this imperative claimant had to be paid or else the bank would have to stop, and this was a casualty which Potts could not yet face with calmness. Before it came to that he was determined to pay out his last sovereign.

On paying the thirty thousand pounds it was found that there were only two bags left of two thousand pounds each.

The other man who had waited stood calmly, while the one who had been paid was making arrangements about conveying his money away.

It was now two o'clock. The stranger said quietly to the clerk opposite that he wanted gold.

"How much?" said the clerk, with the same blandness.

"Forty thousand pounds," answered the stranger.

"Sorry we can't accommodate you, Sir," returned the clerk.

Potts had heard this and came forward.

"Won't you take a draft on London?" said he.

"Can't," replied the man; "I was ordered to get gold."

"A draft on Smithers & Co.?"

"Couldn't take even Bank of England notes," said the stranger; "I'm only an agent. If you can't accommodate me I'm sorry, I'm sure."

Potts was silent. His face was ghastly. As much agony as such a man could endure was felt by him at that moment.

Half an hour afterward the shutters were up; and outside the door stood a wild and riotous crowd, the most noisy of whom was the tailor.

The Brandon Bank had failed.

CHAPTER L.

THE BANK DIRECTORS.

The bank doors were closed, and the bank directors were left to their own reflections. Clark had been in through the day, and at the critical moment his feelings had overpowered him so much that he felt compelled to go over to the inn to get something to drink, wherewith he might refresh himself and keep up his spirits.

Potts and John remained in the bank parlor. The clerks had gone. Potts was in that state of dejection in which even liquor was not desirable. John showed his usual nonchalance.

"Well, Johnnie," said Potts, after a long silence, "we're used up!"

"The bank's bursted, that's a fact. You were a fool for fighting it out so long."

"I might as well. I was responsible, at any rate."

"You might have kept your gold."

"Then my estate would have been good. Besides, I hoped to fight through this difficulty. In fact, I hadn't any thing else to do."

"Why not?"

"Smithers & Co."

"Ah! yes."

"They'll be down on me now. That's what I was afraid of all along."

"How much do you owe them?"

"Seven hundred and two thousand pounds."

"The devil! I thought it was only five hundred thousand."

"It's been growing every day. It's a dreadful dangerous thing to have unlimited credit."

"Well, you've got something as an offset. The debts due the bank."

"Johnnie," said Potts, taking a long breath, "since Clark isn't here I don't mind telling you that my candid opinion is them debts isn't worth a rush. A great crowd of people came here for money. I didn't hardly ask a question. I shelled out royally. I wanted to be known, so

as to get into Parliament some day. I did what is called 'going it blind.'"

"How much is owing you?"

"The books say five hundred and thirteen thousand pounds—but it's doubtful if I can get any of it. And now Smithers & Co. will be down on me at once."

"What do you intend to do?"

"I don't know."

"Haven't you thought?"

"No, I couldn't."

"Well, I have."

"What?"

"You'll have to try to compromise."

"What if they won't?"

John shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing.

"After all," resumed Potts, hopefully, "it can't be so bad. The estate is worth two millions."

"Pooh!"

"Isn't it?"

"Of course not. You know what you bought it for."

"That's because it was thrown away."

"Well, it 'll have to be thrown away again."

"Oh, Smithers & Co. 'll be easy. They don't care for money."

"Perhaps so. The fact is, I don't understand Smithers & Co. at all. I've tried to see through their little game, but can't begin to do it."

"Oh, that's easy enough! They knew I was rich, and let me have what money I wanted."

John looked doubtful.

At this moment a rap was heard at the back door.

"There comes Clark!" said he.

Potts opened the door. Clark entered. His face was flushed, and his eyes bloodshot.

"See here," said he, mysteriously, as he entered the room.

"What?" asked the others, anxiously.

"There's two chaps at the inn. One is the Italian—"

"Langhetti!"

"Ay," said Clark, gloomily; "and the other is his mate—that fellow that helped him to carry off the gal. They've done it again this time, and my opinion is that these fellows are at the bottom of all our troubles. You know *whose son he is.*"

Potts and John exchanged glances.

"I went after that devil once, and I'm going to try it again. This time I'll take some one who isn't afraid of the devil. Johnnie, is the dog at the Hall?"

"Yes."

"All right!" said Clark. "I'll be even with this fellow yet, if he is in league with the devil."

With these words Clark went out, and left the two together. A glance of savage exultation passed over the face of Potts.

"If he comes back successful," said he, "all right, and if he doesn't, why then"— He paused.

"If he doesn't come back," said John, finishing the sentence for him, "why then—all right-er."

CHAPTER LI.

A STRUGGLE.

All the irresolution which for a time had characterized Despard had vanished before the shock of that great discovery which his father's manuscript had revealed to him. One purpose now lay clearly and vividly before him, one which to so loyal and devoted a nature as his was the holiest duty, and that was vengeance on his father's murderers.

In this purpose he took refuge from his own grief; he cast aside his own longings, his anguish, his despair. Langhetti wished to search after his "Bice;" Despard wished to find those whom his dead father had denounced to him. In the intensity of his purpose he was careless as to the means by which that vengeance should be accomplished. He thought not whether it would be better to trust to the slow action of the law, or to take the task into his own hands. His only wish was to be confronted with either of these men, or both of them.

It was with this feeling in his heart that he set out with Langhetti, and the two went once more in company to the village of Brandon, where they arrived on the last day of the "run on the bank."

He did not know exactly what it would be best to do first. His one idea was to go to the Hall, and confront the murderers in their own place. Langhetti, however, urged the need of help from the civil magistrate. It was while they were deliberating about this that a letter was brought in addressed to the *Rev. Courtenay Despard.*

Despard did not recognize the handwriting. In some surprise how any one should know that he was here he opened the letter, and his surprise was still greater as he read the following:

"Sir,—There are two men here whom you seek—one Potts, the other Clark. You can see them both at any time.

"The young lady whom you and Signor Langhetti formerly rescued has escaped, and is now in safety at Denton, a village not more than twenty miles away. She lives in the last cottage on the left-hand side of the road, close by the sea. There is an American elm in front."

There was no signature.

Despard handed it in silence to Langhetti, who read it eagerly. Joy spread over his face. He started to his feet.

"I must go at once," said he, excitedly. "Will you?"

"No," replied Despard. "You had better go. I must stay; my purpose is a different one."

"But do not you also wish to secure the safety of Bice?"

"Of course; but I shall not be needed. You will be enough."

Langhetti tried to persuade him, but Despard was immovable. For himself he was too impatient to wait. He determined to set out at once. He could not get a carriage, but he managed to obtain a horse, and with this he set out. It was about the time when the bank had closed.

Just before his departure Despard saw a man come from the bank and enter the inn. He knew the face, for he had seen it when here before. It was Clark. At the sight of this face all his fiercest instinct awoke within him—a deep thirst for vengeance arose. He could not lose sight of this man. He determined to track him, and thus by active pursuit to do something toward the accomplishment of his purpose.

He watched him, therefore, as he entered the inn, and caught a hasty glance which Clark di-

rected at himself
understand the me
over the ruffian's f
the full meaning of
ered over Despard'
fully and menacing
Clark came out
quitting the bank
at Langhetti, who
watched him till he
In about half a
horseback followed
while with the land
slow trot.
On questioning
that Clark had as
which Langhetti ha
flashed upon him

"THE NEXT INSTANT DESPARD HAD SEIZED HIM BY THE THROAT AND HELD HIM DOWN SO THAT HE COULD NOT MOVE."

rected at himself and Langhetti. He did not understand the meaning of the scowl that passed over the ruffian's face, nor did Clark understand the full meaning of that gloomy frown which lowered over Despard's brow as his eyes blazed wrathfully and menacingly upon him.

Clark came out and went to the bank. On quitting the bank Despard saw him looking back at Langhetti, who was just leaving. He then watched him till he went up to the Hall.

In about half an hour Clark came back on horseback followed by a dog. He talked for a while with the landlord, and then went off at a slow trot.

On questioning the landlord Despard found that Clark had asked him about the direction which Langhetti had taken. The idea at once flashed upon him that possibly Clark wished to pursue Langhetti, in order to find out about Beatrice. He determined on pursuit, both for Langhetti's sake and his own.

He followed, therefore, not far behind Clark, riding at first rapidly till he caught sight of him at the summit of a hill in front, and then keeping at about the same distance behind him. He had not determined in his mind what it was best to do, but held himself prepared for any course of action.

After riding about an hour he put spurs to his horse, and went on at a more rapid pace. Yet he did not overtake Clark, and therefore conjectured that Clark himself must have gone on more rapidly. He now put his own horse at its fullest speed, with the intention of coming up with his enemy as soon as possible.

He rode on at a tremendous pace for another

half hour. At last the road took a sudden turn; and, whirling around here at the utmost speed, he burst upon a scene which was as startling as it was unexpected, and which roused to madness all the fervid passion of his nature.

The road here descended, and in its descent wound round a hill and led into a gentle hollow, on each side of which hills arose which were covered with trees.

Within this glen was disclosed a frightful spectacle. A man lay on the ground, torn from his horse by a huge blood-hound, which even then was rending him with its huge fangs! The dismounted rider's foot was entangled in the stirrups, and the horse was plunging and dragging him along, while the dog was pulling him back. The man himself uttered not a cry, but tried to fight off the dog with his hands as best he could.

In the horror of the moment Despard saw that it was Langhetti. For an instant his brain reeled. The next moment he had reached the spot. Another horseman was standing close by, without pretending even to interfere. Despard did not see him; he saw nothing but Langhetti. He flung himself from his horse, and drew a revolver from his pocket. A loud report rang through the air, and in an instant the huge blood-hound gave a leap upward, with a piercing yell, and fell dead in the road.

Despard flung himself on his knees beside Langhetti. He saw his hands torn and bleeding, and blood covering his face and breast. A low groan was all that escaped from the sufferer.

"Leave me," he gasped. "Save Bice."

In his grief for Langhetti, thus lying before him in such agony, Despard forgot all else. He seized his handkerchief and tried to stanch the blood.

"Leave me!" gasped Langhetti again. "Bice will be lost." His head, which Despard had supported for a moment, sank back, and life seemed to leave him.

Despard started up. Now for the first time he recollected the stranger; and in an instant understood who he was, and why this had been done. Suddenly, as he started up, he felt his pistol snatched from his hand by a strong grasp. He turned.

It was the horseman—it was Clark—who had stealthily dismounted, and, in his desperate purpose, had tried to make sure of Despard.

But Despard, quick as thought, leaped upon him, and caught his hand. In the struggle the pistol fell to the ground. Despard caught Clark in his arms, and then the contest began.

Clark was of medium size, thick-set, muscular, robust, and desperate. Despard was tall, but his frame was well knit, his muscles and sinews were like iron, and he was inspired by a higher spirit and a deeper passion.

In the first shock of that fierce embrace not a word was spoken. For some time the struggle was maintained without result. Clark had caught Despard at a disadvantage, and this for a time prevented the latter from putting forth his strength effectually.

At last he wound one arm around Clark's neck in a strangling grasp, and forced his other arm under that of Clark. Then with one tremendous, one resistless impulse, he put forth all his strength. His antagonist gave way before it. He reeled.

Despard disengaged one arm and dealt him a tremendous blow on the temple. At the same instant he twined his legs about those of the other. At the stroke Clark, who had already staggered, gave way utterly and fell heavily backward, with Despard upon him.

The next instant Despard had seized his throat and held him down so that he could not move.

The wretch gasped and groaned. He struggled to escape from that iron hold in vain. The hand which had seized him was not to be shaken off. Despard had fixed his grasp there, and there in the throat of the fainting, suffocating wretch he held it.

The struggles grew fainter, the arms relaxed, the face blackened, the limbs stiffened. At last all efforts ceased.

Despard then arose, and, turning Clark over on his face, took the bridle from one of the horses, bound his hands behind him, and fastened his feet securely. In the fierce struggle Clark's coat and waistcoat had been torn awar, and slipped down to some extent. His shirt-collar had burst and slipped with them. As Despard turned him over and proceeded to tie him, something struck his eye. It was a bright, red scar.

He pulled down the shirt. A mark appeared, the full meaning of which he knew not, but could well conjecture. There were three brands—fiery red—and these were the marks:

CHAPTER LII.

FACE TO FACE.

On the same evening Potts left the bank at about five o'clock, and went up to the Hall with John. He was morose, gloomy, and abstracted. The great question now before him was how to deal with Smithers & Co. Should he write to them, or go and see them, or what? How could he satisfy their claims, which he knew would now be presented? Involved in thoughts like these, he entered the Hall, and, followed by John, went to the dining-room, where father and son sat down to refresh themselves over a bottle of brandy.

They had not been seated half an hour before the noise of carriage-wheels was heard; and on looking out they saw a dog-cart drawn by two magnificent horses, which drove swiftly up to the portico. A gentleman dismounted, and, throwing the reins to his servant, came up the steps.

The stranger was of medium size, with an aristocratic air, remarkably regular features, of pure Grecian outline, and deep, black, lustrous eyes. His brow was dark and stern, and clouded over by a gloomy frown.

"Who the devil is he?" cried Potts. "D—n that porter! I told him to let no one in to-day."

"I believe the porter's playing fast and loose with us. But, by Jove! do you see that fellow's eyes? Do you know who else has such eyes?"

"No."

"Old Smithers."

"Smithers!"

"Yes."

"Then this is young Smithers?"

"Yes; or else the devil," said John, harshly. "I begin to have an idea," he continued. "I've been thinking about this for some time."

"What is it?"

"Old Smithers had these eyes. That last chap that drew the forty thousand out of you kept his eyes covered. Here comes this fellow with the same eyes. I begin to trace a connection between them."

"Pooh! Old Smithers is old enough to be this man's grandfather."

"Did you ever happen to notice that old Smithers hadn't a wrinkle in his face?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing—only his hair mightn't have been natural; that's all."

Potts and John exchanged glances, and nothing was said for some time.

"Perhaps this Smithers & Son have been at the bottom of all this," continued John. "They are the only ones who could have been strong enough."

"But why should they?"

John shook his head.

"Despard or Langhetti may have got them to do it. Perhaps that d—d girl did it. Smithers & Co. will make money enough out of the speculation to pay them. As for me and you, I begin to have a general but very accurate idea of ruin. You are getting squeezed pretty close up to the wall, dad, and they won't give you time to breathe."

Before this conversation had ended the stranger had entered, and had gone up to the drawing-room. The servant came down to announce him.

"What name?" asked Potts.

"He didn't give any."

Potts looked perplexed.

"Come now," said John. "This fellow has overreached himself at last. He's come here; perhaps it won't be so easy for him to get out. I'll have all the servants ready. Do you keep up your spirits. Don't get frightened, but be plucky. Bluff him, and when the time comes ring the bell, and I'll march in with all the servants."

Potts looked for a moment at his son with a glance of deep admiration.

"Johnnie, you've got more sense in your little finger than I have in my whole body. Yes: we've got this fellow, whoever he is; and if he turns out to be what I suspect, then we'll spring the trap on him, and he'll learn what it is to play with edge tools."

With these words Potts departed, and, ascending the stairs, entered the drawing-room.

The stranger was standing looking out of one of the windows. His attitude brought back to Potts's recollection the scene which had once occurred there, when old Smithers was holding Beatrice in his arms. The recollection of this threw a flood of light on Potts's mind. He recalled it with a savage exultation. Perhaps they were the same, as John said—perhaps; no, most assuredly they must be the same.

"I've got him now, any way," murmured Potts to himself, "whoever he is."

The stranger turned and looked at Potts for a few moments. He neither bowed nor uttered any salutation whatever. In his look there was a certain terrific menace, an indefinable glance of conscious power, combined with implacable hate. The frown which usually rested on his brow darkened and deepened till the gloomy shadows that covered them seemed like thunder-clouds.

Before that awful look Potts felt himself cowering involuntarily; and he began to feel less confidence in his own power, and less sure that the stranger had flung himself into a trap. However, the silence was embarrassing; so at last, with an effort, he said:

"Well; is there any thing you want of me? I'm in a hurry."

"Yes," said the stranger, "I reached the village to-day to call at the bank, but found it closed."

"Oh! I suppose you've got a draft on me, too."

"Yes," said the stranger, mysteriously. "I suppose I may call it a draft."

"There's no use in troubling your head about it, then," returned Potts; "I won't pay."

"You won't?"

"Not a penny."

A sharp, sudden smile of contempt flashed over the stranger's face.

"Perhaps if you knew what the draft is, you would feel differently."

"I don't care what it is."

"That depends upon the drawer."

"I don't care who the drawer is. I won't pay it. I don't care even if it's Smithers & Co. I'll settle all when I'm ready. I'm not going to be bullied any longer. I've borne enough. You needn't look so very grand," he continued, pettishly; "I see through you, and you can't keep up this sort of thing much longer."

"You appear to hint that you know who I am?"

"Something of that sort," said Potts, rudely; "and let me tell you I don't care who you are."

"That depends," rejoined the other, calmly, "very much upon circumstances."

"So you see," continued Potts, "you won't get any thing out of me—not this time," he added.

"My draft," said the stranger, "is different from those which were presented at the bank counter."

He spoke in a tone of deep solemnity, with a tone which seemed like the tread of some inevitable Fate advancing upon its victim. Potts felt an indefinable fear stealing over him in spite of himself. He said not a word.

"My draft," continued the stranger, in a tone which was still more aggressive in its dominant and self-assertive power—"my draft was drawn twenty years ago."

Potts looked wonderingly and half fearfully at him.

"My draft," said the other, "was drawn by Colonel Lionel Despard."

A chill went to the heart of Potts. With a violent effort he shook off his fear.

"Pooh!" said he, "you're at that old story, are you? That nonsense won't do here."

"It was dated at sea," continued the stranger, in tones which still deepened in awful emphasis —"at sea, when the writer was all alone."

"It's a lie!" cried Potts, while his face grew white.

"At sea," continued the other, ringing the changes on this one word, "at sea—on board that ship to which you had brought him—the *Vishnu!*"

Potts was like a man fascinated by some horrid spectacle. He looked fixedly at his interlocutor. His jaw fell.

"There he died," said the stranger. "Who caused his death? Will you answer?"

With a tremendous effort Potts again recovered command of himself.

"You—you've been reading up old papers," replied he, in a stammering voice. "You've got a lot of stuff in your head which you think will frighten me. You've come to the wrong shop."

But in spite of these words the pale face and nervous manner of Potts showed how deep was his agitation.

"I myself was on board the *Vishnu*," said the other.

"You!"

"Yes, I."

"You! Then you must have been precious small. The *Vishnu* went down twenty years ago."

"I was on board of the *Vishnu*, and I saw Colonel Despard."

The memory of some awful scene seemed to inspire the tones of the speaker—they thrilled through the coarse, brutal nature of the listener.

"I saw Colonel Despard," continued the stranger.

"You lie!" cried Potts, roused by terror and horror to a fierce pitch of excitement.

"I saw Colonel Despard," repeated the stranger, for the third time, "on board the *Vishnu* in the Indian Sea. I learned from him his story—"

He paused.

"Then," cried Potts, quickly, to whom there suddenly came an idea which brought courage with it; "then, if you saw him, what concern is it of mine? He was alive, then, and the Despard murder never took place."

"It did take place," said the other.

"You're talking nonsense. How could it if you saw him? He must have been alive."

"*He was dead!*" replied the stranger, whose eyes had never withdrawn themselves from those of Potts, and now seemed like two fiery orbs blazing wrathfully upon him. The tones penetrated to the very soul of the listener. He shuddered in spite of himself. Like most vulgar natures, his was accessible to superstitious horror. He heard and trembled.

"He was dead," repeated the stranger, "and yet all that I told you is true. I learned from him his story."

"Dead men tell no tales," muttered Potts, in a scarce articulate voice.

"So you thought when you locked him in, and set fire to the ship, and scuttled her; but you see you were mistaken, for here at least was a dead man who did tell tales, and I was the listener."

And the mystic solemnity of the man's face seemed to mark him as one who might indeed have held commune with the dead.

"He told me," continued the stranger, "where he found you, and how."

Awful expectation was manifest on the face of Potts.

"He told me of the mark on your arm. Draw up your sleeve, Briggs, Potts, or whatever other name you choose, and show the indelible characters which represent the name of *Bowhani*."

Potts started back. His lips grew ashen. His teeth chattered.

"He gave me this," cried the stranger, in a louder voice; "and this is the draft which you will not reject."

He strode forward three or four paces, and flung something toward Potts.

It was a cord, at the end of which was a metallic ball. The ball struck the table as it fell, and rolled to the floor, but the stranger held the other end in his hand.

"THUG!" cried he; "do you know what that is?"

Had the stranger been Olympian Jove, and had he flung forth from his right hand a thunder-bolt, it could not have produced a more appalling effect than that which was wrought upon Potts by the sight of this cord. He started back in horror, uttering a cry half way between a scream and a groan. Big drops of perspiration started from his brow. He trembled and shuddered from head to foot. His jaw fell. He stood speechless.

"That is my draft," said the stranger.

"What do you want?" gasped Potts.

"The title deeds of the Brandon estates!"

"The Brandon estates!" said Potts, in a faltering voice.

"Yes, the Brandon estates; nothing less."

"And will you then keep silent?"

"I will give you the cord."

"Will you keep silent?"

"I am your master," said the other, haughtily, as his burning eyes fixed themselves with a consuming gaze upon the abject wretch before him; "I am your master. I make no promises. I spare you or destroy you as I choose."

These words reduced Potts to despair. In the depths of that despair he found hope. He started up, defiant. With an oath he sprang to the bell-rope and pulled again and again, till the peals reverberated through the house.

The stranger stood with a scornful smile on his face. Potts turned to him savagely:

"I'll teach you," he cried, "that you've come to the wrong shop. I'm not a child. Who you are I don't know and don't care. You are the cause of my ruin, and you'll repent of it."

The stranger said nothing, but stood with the same fixed and scornful smile. A noise was heard outside, the tramp of a crowd of men. They ascended the stairs. At last John appeared at the door of the room, followed by thirty servants. Prominent among these was Asgeelo. Near him was Vijal. Potts gave a triumphant

smile. The servan
the room.

"Now," cried Po
in a trap, I think.
born idiot. Give u

The stranger sai
cord coolly, placed
garded Potts with

"Here!" cried P
"Catch that man,

The servants had
the room at John's
stood there looking
of them moved.
The stranger turne
his face.

Vijal glanced aro
the other servants.

"You devils!" cri
I say? Seize that m
None of the servan

"It's my belief,"
ratting."

"Vijal!" cried Po

Vijal rushed forwa
lo bounded forward
leap, and seizing Vij
to the floor.

"THUG! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS?"

smile. The servants ranged themselves around the room.

"Now," cried Potts, "you're in for it. You're in a trap, I think. You'll find that I'm not a born idiot. Give up that cord!"

The stranger said nothing, but wound up the cord coolly, placed it in his pocket, and still regarded Potts with his scornful smile.

"Here!" cried Potts, addressing the servants. "Catch that man, and tie his hands and feet."

The servants had taken their station around the room at John's order. As Potts spoke they stood there looking at the stranger, but not one of them moved. Vijal only started forward. The stranger turned toward him and looked in his face.

Vijal glanced around in surprise, waiting for the other servants.

"You devils!" cried Potts, "do you hear what I say? Seize that man!"

None of the servants moved.

"It's my belief," said John, "that they're all ratting."

"Vijal!" cried Potts, savagely, "tackle him."

Vijal rushed forward. At that instant Asgeelo bounded forward also with one tremendous leap, and seizing Vijal by the throat hurled him to the floor.

The stranger waved his hand.

"Let him go!" said he.

Asgeelo obeyed.

"What the devil's the meaning of this?" cried John, looking around in dismay. Potts also looked around. There stood the servants—motionless, impassive.

"For the last time," roared Potts, with a perfect volley of oaths, "seize that man, or you'll be sorry for it."

The servants stood motionless. The stranger remained in the same attitude with the same strange smile.

"You see," said he, at last, "that you don't know me, after all. You are in my power, Briggs—you can't get away, nor can your son."

Potts rushed, with an oath, to the door. Half a dozen servants were standing there. As he came furiously toward them they held out their clenched fists. He rushed upon them. They beat him back. He fell, foaming at the lips.

John stood cool and unmoved, looking around the room, and learning from the face of each servant that they were all beyond his authority. He folded his arms, and said nothing.

"You appear to have been mistaken in your man," said the stranger, coolly. "These are

not your servants; they're mine. Shall I tell them to seize you?"

Potts glared at him with bloodshot eyes, but said nothing.

"Shall I tell them to pull up your sleeve and display the mark of Bowhani, Sir? Shall I tell who and what you are? Shall I begin from your birth and give them a full and complete history of your life?"

Potts looked around like a wild beast in the arena, seeking for some opening for escape, but finding nothing except hostile faces.

"Do what you like!" he cried, desperately, with an oath, and sank down into stolid despair.

"No; you don't mean that," said the other. "For I have some London policemen at the inn, and I might like best to hand you over to them on charges which you can easily imagine. You don't wish me to do so, I think. You'd prefer being at large to being chained up in a cell, or sent to Botany Bay, I suppose? Still, if you prefer it, I will at once arrange an interview between yourself and these gentlemen."

"What do you want?" anxiously asked Potts, who now thought that he might come to terms, and perhaps gain his escape from the clutches of his enemy.

"The title deeds of the Brandon estate," said the stranger.

"Never!"

"Then off you go. They must be mine, at any rate. Nothing can prevent that. Either give them now and begone, or delay, and you go at once to jail."

"I won't give them," said Potts, desperately.

"Cato!" said the stranger, "go and fetch the policemen."

"Stop!" cried John.

At a sign Asgeelo, who had already taken two steps toward the door, paused.

"Here, dad," said John, "you've got to do it. You might as well hand over the papers. You don't want to get into quod, I think."

Potts turned his pale face to his son.

"Do it!" exclaimed John.

"Well," he said, with a sigh, "since I've got to, I've got to, I suppose. You know best, Johnnie. I always said you had a long head."

"I must go and get them," he continued.

"I'll go with you; or no—Cato shall go with you, and I'll wait here."

The Hindu went with Potts, holding his collar in his powerful grasp, and taking care to let Potts see the hilt of a knife which he carried up his sleeve, in the other hand.

After about a quarter of an hour they returned, and Potts handed over to the stranger some papers. He looked at them carefully, and put them in his pocket. He then gave Potts the cord. Potts took it in an abstracted way, and said nothing.

"You must leave this Hall to-night," said the stranger, sternly—"you and your son. I remain here."

"Leave the Hall?" gasped Potts.

"Yes."

For a moment he stood overwhelmed. He looked at John. John nodded his head slowly.

"You've got to do it, dad," said he.

Potts turned savagely at the stranger. He shook his clenched fist at him.

"D—n you!" he cried. "Are you satisfied yet? I know you. I'll pay you up. What complaint have you against me, I'd like to know? I never harmed you."

"You don't know me, or you wouldn't say that."

"I do. You're Smithers & Co."

"True; and I'm several other people. I've had the pleasure of an extended intercourse with you. For I'm not only Smithers & Co., but I'm also Beamish & Hendricks, American merchants. I'm also Bigelow, Higginson, & Co., solicitors to Smithers & Co. Besides, I'm your London broker, who attended to your speculations in stocks. Perhaps you think that you don't know me after all."

As he said this Potts and John exchanged glances of wonder.

"Tricked!" cried Potts—"deceived! humbugged! and ruined! Who are you? What have you against me? Who are you? Who?"

And he gazed with intense curiosity upon the calm face of the stranger, who, in his turn, looked upon him with the air of one who was surveying from a superior height some feeble creature far beneath him.

"Who am I?" he repeated. "Who? I am the one to whom all this belongs. I am one whom you have injured so deeply, that what I have done to you is nothing in comparison."

"Who are you?" cried Potts, with feverish impatience. "It's a lie. I never injured you. I never saw you before till you came yourself to trouble me. Those whom I have injured are all dead, except that parson, the son of—of the officer."

"There are others."

Potts said nothing, but looked with some fearful discovery dawning upon him.

"You know me now!" cried the stranger. "I see it in your face."

"You're not *him!*" exclaimed Potts, in a piercing voice.

"I am Louis Brandon!"

"I knew it! I knew it!" cried John, in a voice which was almost a shriek.

"Cigole played false. I'll make him pay for this," gasped Potts.

"Cigole did not play false. He killed me as well as he could— But away, both of you. I can not breathe while you are here. I will allow you an hour to be gone."

At the end of the hour Brandon of Brandon Hall was at last master in the home of his ancestors.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE COTTAGE.

When Despard had bound Clark he returned to look after Langhetti. He lay feebly and motionless upon the ground. Despard carefully examined his wounds. His injuries were very severe. His arms were lacerated, and his shoulder torn; blood also was issuing from a wound on the side of his neck. Despard bound these up as best he could, and then sat wondering what could be done next.

He judged that he might be four or five miles from Denton, and saw that this was the place to which he must go. Besides, Beatrice was there, and she could nurse Langhetti. But how could

he get there?—that was the question. It was impossible for Langhetti to go on horseback. He tried to form some plan by which this might be done. He began to make a sort of litter to be hung between two horses, and had already cut down with his knife two small trees or rather bushes for this purpose, when the noise of wheels on the road before him attracted his attention.

It was a farmer's wagon, and it was coming from the direction of Denton. Despard stopped it, explained his situation, and offered to pay any thing if the farmer would turn back and convey his friend and his prisoner to Denton. It did not take long to strike a bargain; the farmer turned his horses, some soft shrubs and ferns were strewn on the bottom of the wagon, and on these Langhetti was deposited carefully. Clark, who by this time had come to himself, was put at one end, where he sat grimly and sulkily; the three horses were led behind, and Despard, riding on the wagon, supported the head of Langhetti on his knees.

Slowly and carefully they went to the village. Despard had no difficulty in finding the cottage. It was where the letter had described it. The village inn stood near on the opposite side of the road.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening when they reached the cottage. Lights were burning in the windows. Despard jumped out hastily and knocked. A servant came. Despard asked for the mistress, and Beatrice appeared. As she recognized him her face lighted up with joy. But Despard's face was sad and gloomy. He pressed her hand in silence and said:

"My dear adopted sister, I bring you our beloved Langhetti."

"Langhetti!" she exclaimed, fearfully.

"He has met with an accident. Is there a doctor in the place? Send your servant at once."

Beatrice hurried in and returned with a servant.

"We will first lift him out," said Despard. "Is there a bed ready?"

"Oh yes! Bring him in!" cried Beatrice, who was now in an agony of suspense.

She hurried after them to the wagon. They lifted Langhetti out and took him into a room which Beatrice showed them. They tenderly laid him on the bed. Meanwhile the servant had hurried off for a doctor, who soon appeared.

Beatrice sat by his bedside; she kissed the brow of the almost unconscious sufferer, and tried in every possible way to alleviate his pain. The doctor soon arrived, dressed his wounds, and left directions for his care, which consisted chiefly in constant watchfulness.

Leaving Langhetti under the charge of Beatrice, Despard went in search of a magistrate. He found one without any difficulty, and before an hour Clark was safe in jail. The information which Despard lodged against him was corroborated by the brands on his back, which showed him to be a man of desperate character, who had formerly been transported for crime.

Despard next wrote a letter to Mrs. Thornton. He told her about Langhetti, and urged her to come on immediately and bring Edith with her. Then he returned to the cottage and wished to sit up with Langhetti. Beatrice, however, would not let him. She said that no one should deprive her of the place by his bedside. Despard remained, however, and the two devoted equal attention to the sufferer. Langhetti spoke only once. He was so faint that his voice was scarce audible. Beatrice put her ear close to his mouth.

"What is it?" asked Despard.

"He wants Edith," said Beatrice.

"I have written for her," said Despard.

Beatrice whispered this to Langhetti. An ecstatic smile passed over his face.

"It is well," he murmured.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE WORM TURNS.

Potts departed from the Hall in deep dejection. The tremendous power of his enemy had been shown all along; and now that this enemy turned out to be Louis Brandon, he felt as though some supernatural being had taken up arms against him. Against that being a struggle seemed as hopeless as it would be against Fate. It was with some such feeling as this that he left Brandon Hall forever.

All of his grand projects had broken down, suddenly and utterly. He had not a ray of hope left of ever regaining the position which he had but recently occupied. He was thrust back to the obscurity from which he had emerged.

One thing troubled him. Would the power of his remorseless enemy be now stayed—would his vengeance end here? He could scarce hope for this. He judged that enemy by himself, and he knew that he would not stop in the search after vengeance, that nothing short of the fullest and direst ruin—nothing, in fact, short of death itself would satisfy him.

John was with him, and Vijal, who alone out of all the servants had followed his fortunes. These three walked down and passed through the gates together, and emerged into the outer world in silence. But when they had left the gates the silence ended.

"Well, dad!" said John, "what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know."

"Have you any money?"

"Four thousand pounds in the bank."

"Not much, dad," said John, slowly, "for a man who last month was worth millions. You're coming out at the little end of the horn."

Potts made no reply.

"At any rate there's one comfort," said John, "even about that."

"What comfort?"

"Why, you went in at the little end."

They walked on in silence.

"You must do something," said John at last.

"What can I do?"

"You won't let that fellow ride the high horse in this style, will you?"

"How can I help it?"

"You can't help it; but you can strike a blow yourself."

"How?"

"How? You've struck blows before to some purpose, I think."

"But I never yet knew any one with such tremendous power as this man has. And where did he get all his money? You said before that he was the devil, and I believe it. Where's Clark? Do you think he has succeeded?"

"No," said John.

"No more do I. This man has every body in his pay. Look at the servants! See how easily he did what he wished!"

"You've got one servant left."

"Ah, yes—that's a fact."

"That servant will do something for you."

"What do you mean?"

"Brandon is a man, after all—and can *die*," said John, with deep emphasis. "Vijal," he continued, in a whisper, "hates me, but he would lay down his life for you."

"I understand," said Potts, after a pause.

A long silence followed.

"You go on to the inn," said Potts, at last. "I'll talk with Vijal."

"Shall I risk the policemen?"

"Yes, you run no risk. I'll sleep in the bank."

"All right," said John, and he walked away.

"Vijal," said Potts, dropping back so as to wait for the Malay. "You are faithful to me."

"Yes," answered Vijal.

"All the others betrayed me, but you did not?"

"Never."

"Do you know when you first saw me?"

"Yes."

"I saved your life."

"Yes."

"Your father was seized at Manilla and killed for murder, but I protected you, and promised to take care of you. Haven't I done so?"

"Yes," said Vijal humbly, and in a reverent tone.

"Haven't I been another father?"

"You have."

"Didn't I promise to tell you some day who the man was that killed your father?"

"Yes," exclaimed Vijal, fiercely.

"Well, I'm going to tell you."

"Who?" cried Vijal, in excitement so strong that he could scarce speak.

"Did you see that man who drove me out of the Hall?"

"Yes."

"Well, that was the man. He killed your father. He has ruined me—your other father. What do you say to that?"

"He shall die," returned Vijal, solemnly. "He shall die."

"I am an old man," resumed Potts. "If I were as strong as I used to be I would not talk about this to you. I would do it all myself."

"I'll do it!" cried Vijal. "I'll do it!"

His eyes flashed, his nostrils dilated—all the savage within him was aroused. Potts saw this, and rejoiced.

"Do you know how to use this?" he asked, showing Vijal the cord which Brandon had given him.

Vijal's eyes dilated, and a wilder fire shone in them. He seized the cord, turned it round his hand for a moment, and then hurled it at Potts. It passed round and round his waist.

"Ah!" said Potts, with deep gratification. "You have not forgotten, then. You can throw it skillfully."

Vijal nodded, and said nothing.

"Keep the cord. Follow up that man. Avenge your father's death and my ruin."

"I will," said Vijal, sternly.

"It may take long. Follow him up. Do not come back to me till you come to tell me that he is dead."

Vijal nodded.

"Now I am going. I must fly and hide myself from this man. As long as he lives I am in danger. But you will always find John at the inn when you wish to see me."

"I will lay down my life for you," said Vijal.

"I don't want your life," returned Potts. "I want *his*."

"You shall have it," exclaimed Vijal.

Potts said no more. He handed Vijal his purse in silence. The latter took it without a word. Potts then went toward the bank, and Vijal stood alone in the road.

CHAPTER LV.

ON THE ROAD.

On the following morning Brandon started from the Hall at an early hour. He was on horseback. He rode down through the gates. Passing through the village he went by the inn and took the road to Denton.

He had not gone far before another horseman followed him. The latter rode at a rapid pace. Brandon did not pay any especial attention to him, and at length the latter overtook him. It was when they were nearly abreast that Brandon recognized the other. It was Vijal.

"Good-morning," said Vijal.

"Good-morning," replied Brandon.

"Are you going to Denton?"

"Yes."

"So am I," said Vijal.

Brandon was purposely courteous, although it was not exactly the thing for a gentleman to be thus addressed by a servant. He saw that this servant had overreached himself, and knew that he must have some motive for joining him and addressing him in so familiar a manner.

He suspected what might be Vijal's aim, and therefore kept a close watch on him. He saw that Vijal, while holding the reins in his left hand, kept his right hand concealed in his breast. A suspicion darted across his mind. He stroked his mustache with his own right hand, which he kept constantly upraised, and talked cheerfully and patronizingly with his companion. After a while he fell back a little and drew forth a knife, which he concealed in his hand, and then he rode forward as before abreast of the other, assuming the appearance of perfect calm and indifference.

"Have you left Potts?" said Brandon, after a short time.

"No," replied Vijal.

"Ah! Then you are on some business of his now?"

"Yes."

Brandon was silent.

"Would you like to know what it is?" asked Vijal.

"Not particularly," said Brandon, coldly.

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you choose."

Vijal raised his hand suddenly and gave a quick, short jerk. A cord flew forth—there was a weight at the end. The cord was flung straight at Brandon's neck.

But Brandon had been on his guard. At the

"VIJAL

movement of Vijal'
the cord passed ar
within its embrace.
concealed. In an
through the winding
all; then dropping
into the pocket of hi
recover from his sur
and pointed it at hi
Vijal saw at once
theless plunged his
a desperate effort to
ed off Brandon fire
neigh, which sounde
fell upon the road, t
In an instant Bra
leaped from his hors

"VIJAL LOOKED EARNESTLY AT IT. HE SAW THESE WORDS: JOHN POTTS."

movement of Vijal's arm he had raised his own; the cord passed around him, but his arm was within its embrace. In his hand he held a knife concealed. In an instant he slashed his knife through the windings of the cord, severing them all; then dropping the knife he plunged his hand into the pocket of his coat, and before Vijal could recover from his surprise he drew forth a revolver and pointed it at him.

Vijal saw at once that he was lost. He nevertheless plunged his spurs into his horse and made a desperate effort to escape. As his horse bounded off Brandon fired. The animal gave a wild neigh, which sounded almost like a shriek, and fell upon the road, throwing Vijal over his head.

In an instant Brandon was up with him. He leaped from his horse before Vijal had disencumbered himself from his, and seizing the Malay by the collar held the pistol at his head.

"If you move," he cried, sternly, "I'll blow your brains out!"

Vijal lay motionless.

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed Brandon, as he held him with the revolver pressed against his head, "who sent you to do this?"

Vijal in sullen silence answered nothing.

"Tell me or I'll kill you. Was it Potts?"

Vijal made no reply.

"Speak out," cried Brandon. "Fool that you are, I don't want *your* life."

"You are the murderer of my father," said Vijal, fiercely, "and therefore I sought to kill you."

Brandon gave a low laugh.

"The murderer of your father?" he repeated.

"Yes," cried Vijal, wildly; "and I sought your death."

Brandon laughed again.

"Do you know how old I am?"

Vijal looked up in amazement. He saw by that one look what he had not thought of before in his excitement, that Brandon was a younger man than himself by several years. He was silent.

"How many years is it since your father died?"

Vijal said nothing.

"Fool!" exclaimed Brandon. "It is twenty years. You are false to your father. You pretend to avenge his death, and you seek out a young man who had no connection with it. I was in England when he was killed. I was a child only seven years of age. Do you believe now that I am his murderer?"

Brandon, while speaking in this way, had relaxed his hold, though he still held his pistol pointed at the head of his prostrate enemy. Vijal gave a long, low sigh.

"You were too young," said he, at last. "You are younger than I am. I was only twelve."

"I could not have been his murderer, then?"

"No."

"Yet I know who his murderer was, for I have found out."

"Who?"

"The same man who killed my own father."

Vijal looked at Brandon with awful eyes.

"Your father had a brother?" said Brandon.

"Yes."

"Do you know his name?"

"Yes. Zangorri."

"Right. Well, do you know what Zangorri did to avenge his brother's death?"

"No; what?"

"For many years he vowed death to all Englishmen, since it was an Englishman who had caused the death of his brother. He had a ship; he got a crew and sailed through the Eastern seas, capturing English ships and killing the crews. This was his vengeance."

Vijal gave a groan.

"You see he has done more than you. He knew better than you who it was that had killed your father."

"Who was it?" cried Vijal, fiercely.

"I saw him twice," continued Brandon, without noticing the question of the other. "I saw him twice, and twice he told me the name of the man whose death he sought. For year after year he had sought after that man, but had not found him. Hundreds of Englishmen had fallen. He told me the name of the man whom he sought, and charged me to carry out his work of vengeance. I promised to do so, for I had a work of vengeance of my own to perform, and on the same man, too."

"Who was he?" repeated Vijal, with increased excitement.

"When I saw him last he gave me something which he said he had worn around his neck for years. I took it, and promised to wear it till the vengeance which he sought should be accomplished. I did so, for I too had a debt of vengeance stronger than his, and on the same man."

"Who was he?" cried Vijal again, with restless impetuosity.

Brandon unbuttoned his vest and drew forth a Malay creese, which was hung around his neck and worn under his coat.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked, solemnly.

Vijal took it and looked at it earnestly. His eyes dilated, his nostrils quivered.

"My father's!" he cried, in a tremulous voice.

"Can you read English letters?"

"Yes."

"Can you read the name that is cut upon it?"

And Brandon pointed to a place where some letters were carved.

Vijal looked earnestly at it. He saw these words:

JOHN POTTS.

"That," said Brandon, "is what your father's brother gave to me."

"It's a lie!" growled Vijal, fiercely.

"It's true," said Brandon, calmly, "and it was carved there by your father's own hand."

Vijal said nothing for a long time. Brandon arose, and put his pistol in his pocket. Vijal, disencumbering himself from his horse, arose also. The two stood together on the road.

For hours they remained there talking. At last Brandon remounted and rode on to Denton. But Vijal went back to the village of Brandon. He carried with him the creese which Brandon had given him.

CHAPTER LVI.

FATHER AND SON.

VIJAL, on going back to Brandon village, went first to the inn where he saw John. To the inquiries which were eagerly addressed to him he answered nothing, but simply said that he wished to see Potts. John, finding him impracticable, cursed him and led the way to the bank.

As Vijal entered Potts locked the door carefully, and then anxiously questioned him. Vijal gave a plain account of every thing exactly as it had happened, but with some important alterations and omissions. In the first place, he said nothing whatever of the long interview which had taken place and the startling information which he had received. In the second place, he assured Potts that he must have attacked the wrong man. For when this man had spared his life he looked at him closely and found out that he was not the one that he ought to have attacked.

"You blasted fool," cried Potts. "Haven't you got eyes? D——n you; I wish the fellow, whoever he is, had seized you, or blown your brains out."

Vijal cast down his eyes humbly.

"I can try again," said he. "I have made a mistake this time; the next time I will make sure."

There was something in the tone of his voice so remorseless and so vengeful that Potts felt reassured.

"You are a good lad," said he, "a good lad. And you'll try again?"

"Yes," said Vijal, with flashing eyes.

"You'll make sure this time?"

"I'll make sure this time. But I must have some one with me," he continued. "You need

not trouble yourself. Send John with me. He won't mistake. If he is with me I'll make sure."

As the Malay said this a brighter and more vivid flash shone from his eyes. He gave a malevolent smile, and his white teeth glistened balefully. Instantly he checked the smile, and cast down his eyes.

"Ah!" said Potts. "That is very good. John shall go. Johnnie, you don't mind going, do you?"

"I'll go," said John, languidly.

"You'll know the fellow, won't you?"

"I rather think I should."

"But what will you do first?"

"Go to Denton," said John.

"To Denton?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because Brandon is there."

"How can he be?"

"Simply," said John, "because I know the man that Vijal attacked must have been Brandon. No other person answers to the description. No other person would be so quick to dodge the cord, and so quick with the revolver. He has humbugged Vijal somehow, and this fool of a nigger has believed him. He was Brandon, and no one else, and I'm going on his track."

"Well—you're right, perhaps," said Potts; "but take care of yourself, Johnnie."

John gave a dry smile.

"I'll try to do so; and I hope to take care of others also," said he.

"God bless you, Johnnie!" said Potts, affectionately, not knowing the blasphemy of invoking the blessing of God on one who was setting out to commit murder.

"You're spooney, dad," returned John, and he left the bank with Vijal.

John went back to the inn first, and after a few preparations started for Benton. On the way he amused himself with coarse jests at Vijal's stupidity in allowing himself to be deceived by Brandon, taunted him with cowardice in yielding so easily, and assured him that one who was so great a coward could not possibly succeed in any undertaking.

Toward evening they reached the inn at Denton. John was anxious not to show himself, so he went at once to the inn, directing Vijal to keep a look-out for Brandon and let him know if he saw any one who looked like him. These directions were accompanied and intermingled with numerous threats as to what he would do if Vijal dared to fail in any particular. The Malay listened calmly, showing none of that impatience and haughty resentment which he formerly used to manifest toward John, and quietly promised to do what was ordered.

About ten o'clock John happened to look out of the window. He saw a figure standing where the light from the windows flashed out, which at once attracted his attention. It was the man whom he sought—it was Brandon. Was he stopping at the same inn? If so, why had not Vijal told him? He at once summoned Vijal, who came as calm as ever. To John's impatient questions as to why he had not told him about Brandon, he answered that Brandon had only come there half an hour previously, and that he had been watching him ever since to see what he was going to do.

"You must keep on watching him, then; do you hear?"

"Yes."

"And if you let him slip this time, you infernal nigger, you'll pay dear for it."

"I'll not make a mistake this time," was Vijal's answer. And as he spoke his eyes gleamed, and again that baleful smile passed over his face.

"That's the man," said John. "You understand that? That's the man you've got to fix, do you hear? Don't be a fool this time. You must manage it to-night, for I don't want to wait here forever. I leave it to you. I only came to make sure of the man. I'm tired, and I'm going to bed soon. When I wake to-morrow I expect to hear from you that you have finished this business. If you don't, d——n you, I'll wring your infernal nigger's neck."

"It will all be done by to-morrow," said Vijal, calmly.

"Then clear out and leave me. I'm going to bed. What you've got to do is to watch that man."

Vijal retired.

The night passed. When the following morning came John was not up at the ordinary breakfast hour. Nine o'clock came. Ten o'clock. Still he did not appear.

"He's a lazy fellow," said the landlord, "though he don't look like it. And where's his servant?"

"The servant went back to Brandon at daybreak," was the answer.

Eleven o'clock came. Still there were no signs of John. There was a balcony in the inn which ran in front of the windows of the room occupied by John. After knocking at the door once or twice the landlord tapped at the window and tried to peep in to see if the occupant was awake or not. One part of the blind was drawn a little aside, and showed the bed and the form of a man still lying there.

"He's an awful sleeper," said the landlord. "It's twelve o'clock, and he isn't up yet. Well, it's his business, not mine."

About half an hour after the noise of wheels was heard, and a wagon drove swiftly into the yard of the inn. An old man jumped out, gave his horse to the hostler, and entered the inn.

He was somewhat flushed and flurried. His eyes twinkled brightly, and there was a somewhat exuberant familiarity in his address to the landlord.

"There was a party who stopped here last night," said he, "that I wish to see."

"There was only one person here last night," answered the landlord; "a young man—"

"A young man, yes—that's right; I want to see him."

"Well, as to that," said the landlord, "I don't know but you'll have to wait. He ain't up yet."

"Isn't he up yet?"

"No; he's an awful sleeper. He went to bed last night early, for his lights were out before eleven, and now it's nearly one, and he isn't up."

"At any rate, I must see him."

"Shall I wake him?"

"HE TORE DOWN THE COVERLET, WHICH CONCEALED THE GREATER PART OF HIS FACE."

"Yes, and be quick, for I'm in a hurry."

The landlord went up to the door and knocked loudly. There was no answer. He knocked still more loudly. Still no answer. He then kept up an incessant rapping for about ten minutes. Still there was no answer. He had tried the door before, but it was locked on the inside. He went around to the windows that opened on the balcony; these were open.

He then went down and told the old man that the door was fastened, but that the windows were unfastened. If he chose to go in there he might do so.

"I will do so," said the other, "for I must see him. I have business of importance." He went up.

The landlord and some of the servants, whose curiosity was by this time excited, followed after.

The old man [illegible] the window, which swung back [illegible] entered. There was a man in the [illegible]

He [illegible]ss. The old man approached. He rec[illegible] the face.

A cold [illegible]nt to his heart. He tore down the cover[illegible] concealed the greater part of his face. [illegible] moment he fell forward upon the bed.

"Johnnie [illegible]eamed—"Johnnie!"

There was [illegible]. The face was rigid and fixed. Around the neck was a faint, bluish line, a mark like what might have been made by a cord.

"Johnnie, Johnnie!" cried the old man again, in piercing tones. He caught at the hands of the figure before him; he tried to pull it forward. There was no response. The old man turned

away and rushed to the window, gasping, with white lips, and bloodshot eyes, and a face of horror.

"He is dead!" he shrieked. "My boy—my son—my Johnnie! Murderer! You have killed him."

The landlord and the servants started back in horror from the presence of this father in his misery.

It was for but a moment that he stood there. He went back and flung himself upon the bed. Then he came forth again and stood upon the balcony, motionless, white-faced, speechless—his lips muttering inaudible words.

A crowd gathered round. The story soon spread. This was the father of a young man who had stopped at the inn and died suddenly. The crowd that gathered around the inn saw the father as he stood on the balcony.

The dwellers in the cottage that was almost opposite saw him, and Asgeelo brought them the news.

CHAPTER LVII.

MRS. COMPTON'S SECRET.

On the night after the arrival of John, Brandon had left Denton. He did not return till the following day. On arriving at the inn he saw an unusual spectacle—the old man on the balcony, the crowd of villagers around, the universal excitement.

On entering the inn he found some one who for some time had been waiting to see him. It was Philips. Philips had come early in the morning, and had been over to the cottage. He had learned all about the affair at the inn, and narrated it to Brandon, who listened with his usual calmness. He then gave him a letter from Frank, which Brandon read and put in his pocket.

Then Philips told him the news which he had learned at the cottage about Langhetti. Langhetti and Despard were both there yet, the former very dangerously ill, the latter waiting for some friends. He also told about the affair on the road, the seizure of Clark, and his delivery into the hands of the authorities.

Brandon heard all this with the deepest interest. While the excitement at the inn was still at its height, he hurried off to the magistrate into whose hands Clark had been committed. After an interview with him he returned. He found the excitement unabated. He then went to the cottage close by the inn, where Beatrice had found a home, and Langhetti a refuge. Philips was with him.

On knocking at the door Asgeelo opened it. They entered the parlor, and in a short time Mrs. Compton appeared. Brandon's first inquiry was after Langhetti.

"He is about the same," said Mrs. Compton.

"Does the doctor hold out any hopes of his recovery?" asked Brandon, anxiously.

"Very little," said Mrs. Compton.

"Who nurses him?"

"Miss Potts and Mr. Despard."

"Are they both here?"

"Yes."

Brandon was silent.

"I will go and tell them that you are here," said Mrs. Compton.

Brandon made no reply, and Mrs. Compton, taking silence for assent, went to announce his arrival.

In a short time they appeared. Beatrice entered first. She was grave, and cold, and solemn; Despard was gloomy and stern. They both shook hands with Brandon in silence. Beatrice gave her hand without a word, lifelessly and coldly; Despard took his hand abstractedly.

Brandon looked earnestly at Beatrice as she stood there before him, calm, sad, passionless, almost repellent in her demeanor, and wondered what the cause might be of such a change.

Mrs. Compton stood apart at a little distance, near Philips, and looked on with a strange expression, half wistful, half timid.

There was a silence which at length became embarrassing. From the room where they were sitting the inn could plainly be seen, with the crowd outside. Beatrice's eyes were directed toward this. Despard said not a word. At another time he might have been strongly interested in this man, who on so many accounts was so closely connected with him; but now the power of some dominant and all-engrossing idea possessed him, and he seemed to take no notice of any thing whatever either without the house or within.

After looking in silence at the inn for a long time Beatrice withdrew her gaze. Brandon regarded her with a fixed and earnest glance, as though he would read her inmost soul. She looked at him, and cast down her eyes.

"You abhor me!" said he, in a loud, thrilling voice.

She said nothing, but pointed toward the inn.

"You know all about that?"

Beatrice bowed her head silently.

"And you look upon me as guilty?"

She gazed at him, but said nothing. It was a cold, austere gaze, without one touch of softness.

"After all," said she, "he was my father. You had your vengeance to take, and you have taken it. You may now exult, but my heart bleeds."

Brandon started to his feet.

"As God lives," he cried, "I did not do that thing!"

Beatrice looked up mournfully and inquiringly.

"If it had been his base life which I sought," said Brandon, vehemently, "I might long ago have taken it. He was surrounded on all sides by my power. He could not escape. Officers of the law stood ready to do my bidding. Yet I allowed him to leave the Hall in safety. I might have taken his heart's-blood. I might have handed him over to the law. I did not."

"No," said Beatrice, in icy tones, "you did not; you sought a deeper vengeance. You cared not to take his life. It was sweeter to you to take his son's life and give him agony. Death would have been insufficient—anguish was what you wished."

"It is not for me to blame you," she continued, while Brandon looked at her without a word. "Who am I—a polluted one, of the accursed brood—who am I, to stand between you and him, or to blame you if you seek for vengeance? I am nothing. You have done kindnesses to me which I now wish were undone.

o' that I had died under the hand of the pirates! Oh that the ocean had swept me down to death with all its waves! Then I should not have lived to see this day!"

Roused by her vehemence Despard started from his abstraction and looked around.

"It seems to me," said he, "as if you were blaming some one for inflicting suffering on a man for whom no suffering can be too great. What! can you think of your friend as he lies there in the next room in his agony, dying, torn to pieces by this man's agency, and have pity for him?"

"Oh!" cried Beatrice, "is he not my father?"

Mrs. Compton looked around with staring eyes, and trembled from head to foot. Her lips moved—she began to speak, but the words died away on her lips.

"Your father!" said Despard; "his acts have cut him off from a daughter's sympathy."

"Yet he has a father's feelings, at least for his dead son. Never shall I forget his look of anguish as he stood on the balcony. His face was turned this way. He seemed to reproach me."

"Let me tell you," cried Despard, harshly. "He has not yet made atonement for his crimes. This is but the beginning. I have a debt of vengeance to extort from him. One scoundrel has been handed over to the law, another lies dead, another is in London in the hands of Langhetti's friends, the Carbonari. The worst one yet remains, and my father's voice cries to me day and night from that dreadful ship."

"Your father's voice!" cried Beatrice. She looked at Despard. Their eyes met. Something passed between them in that glance which brought back the old, mysterious feeling which she had known before. Despard rose hastily and left the room.

"In God's name," cried Brandon, "I say that this man's life was not sought by me, nor the life of any of his. I will tell you all. When he compassed the death of Uracao, of whom you know, he obtained possession of his son, then a mere boy, and carried him away. He kept this lad with him and brought him up with the idea that he was his best friend, and that he would one day show him his father's murderer. After I made myself known to him, he told Vijal that I was this murderer. Vijal tried to assassinate me. I foiled him, and could have killed him. But I spared his life. I then told him the truth. That is all that I have done. Of course, I knew that Vijal would seek for vengeance. That was not my concern. Since Potts had sent him to seek my life under a lie, I sent him away with a knowledge of the truth. I do not repent that I told him; nor is there any guilt chargeable to me. The man that lies dead there is not my victim. Yet if he were—oh, Beatrice! if he were—what then? Could that atone for what I have suffered? My father ruined and broken-hearted and dying in a poor-house calls to me always for vengeance. My mother suffering in the emigrant ship, and dying of the plague amidst horrors without a name calls to me. Above all, my sweet sister, my pure Edith—"

"Edith!" interrupted Beatrice—"Edith!"

"Yes; do you not know that? She was buried alive."

"What!" cried Beatrice; "is it possible that you do not know that she is alive?"

"Alive!"

"Yes, alive; for when I was at Holby I saw her."

Brandon stood speechless with surprise.

"Langhetti saved her," said Beatrice. "His sister has charge of her now."

"Where, where is she?" asked Brandon, wildly.

"In a convent at London."

At this moment Despard entered.

"Is this true?" asked Brandon, with a deeper agitation than had ever yet been seen in him—"my sister, is it true that she is not dead?"

"It is true. I should have told you," said Despard, "but other thoughts drove it from my mind, and I forgot that you might be ignorant."

"How is it possible? I was at Quebec myself. I have sought over the world after my relatives—"

"I will tell you," said Despard.

He sat down and began to tell the story of Edith's voyage and all that Langhetti had done, down to the time of his rescue of her from death. The recital filled Brandon with such deep amazement that he had not a word to say. He listened like one stupefied.

"Thank God!" he cried at last when it was ended; "thank God, I am spared this last anguish; I am freed from the thought which for years has been most intolerable. The memories that remain are bitter enough, but they are not so terrible as this. But I must see her. I must find her. Where is she?"

"Make yourself easy on that score," said Despard, calmly. "She will be here to-morrow or the day after. I have written to Langhetti's sister; she will come, and will bring your sister with her."

"I should have told you so before," said Beatrice, "but my own troubles drove every thing else from my mind."

"Forgive me," said Brandon, "for intruding now. I came in to learn about Langhetti. You look upon me with horror. I will withdraw."

Beatrice bowed her head, and tears streamed from her eyes. Brandon took her hand.

"Farewell," he murmured; "farewell, Beatrice. You will not condemn me when I say that I am innocent?"

"I am accursed," she murmured.

Despard looked at these two with deep anxiety.

"Stay," said he to Brandon. "There is something which must be explained. There is a secret which Langhetti has had for years, and which he has several times been on the point of telling. I have just spoken to him and told him that you are here. He says he will tell his secret now, whatever it is. He wishes us all to come in—and you too, especially," said Despard, looking at Mrs. Compton.

The poor old creature began to tremble.

"Don't be afraid, old woman," said Philips. "Take my arm and I'll protect you."

She rose, and, leaning on his arm, followed the others into Langhetti's room. He was fearfully emaciated. His material frame, worn down by pain and confinement, seemed about to dissolve and let free that soaring soul of his, whose fiery impulses had for years chafed against the prison bars of its mortal inclosure. His eyes shone darkly and luminously from their deep,

hollow sockets, and upon his thin, wan, white lips there was a faint smile of welcome—faint like the smile of the sick, yet sweet as the smile of an angel.

It was with such a smile that he greeted Brandon, and with both of his thin white hands pressed the strong and muscular hand of the other.

"And you are Edith's brother," he said. "Edith's brother," he repeated, resting lovingly upon that name, Edith. "She always said you were alive, and once she told me she should live to see you. Welcome, brother of my Edith! I am a dying man. Edith said her other brother was alive—Frank. Where is Frank? Will he not come to stand by the bedside of his dying friend? He did so once."

"He will come," said Brandon, in a voice choked with emotion, as he pressed the hand of the dying man. "He will come, and at once."

"And you will be all here, then—sweet friends! It is well."

He paused.

"Bice!" said he at last.

Beatrice, who was sitting by his head, bent down toward him.

"Bice," said Langhetti. "My pocket book is in my coat, and if you open the inside pocket you will find something wrapped in paper. Bring it to me."

Beatrice found the pocket-book and opened it as directed. In the inside pocket there was a thin, small parcel. She opened it and drew forth a very small baby's stocking.

"Look at the mark," said Langhetti.

Beatrice did so, and saw two letters marked on it—B. D.

"This was given me by your nurse at Hong Kong. She said your things were all marked with those letters when you were first brought to her. She did not know what it meant. 'B' meant Beatrice; but what did 'D' mean?"

All around that bedside exchanged glances of wonder. Mrs. Compton was most agitated.

"Take me away," she murmured to Philips. But Philips would not.

"Cheer up, old woman!" said he. "There's nothing to fear now. That devil won't hurt you."

"Now, in my deep interest in you, and in my affection, I tried to find out what this meant. The nurse and I often talked about it. She told me that your father never cared particularly about you, and that it was strange for your clothing to be marked 'D.' as your name was Potts. It was a thing which greatly troubled her. I made many inquiries. I found out about the Manilla murder case. From that moment I suspected that 'D.' meant Despard.

"Oh, Heavens!" sighed Beatrice, in an agony of suspense. Brandon and Despard stood motionless, waiting for something further.

"This is what I tried to solve. I made inquiries every where. At last I gave it up. But when circumstances threw Beatrice again in my way I tried again. I have always been baffled. There is only one who can tell—only one. She is here, in this room; and, in the name of God, I call upon her to speak out and tell the truth."

"Who?" cried Despard, while he and Brandon both looked earnestly at Mrs. Compton.

"Mrs. Compton!" said Langhetti; and his voice seemed to die away from exhaustion.

Mrs. Compton was seized with a panic more overpowering than usual. She gasped for breath.

"Oh, Lord!" she cried. "Oh, Lord! Spare me! spare me! He'll kill me!"

Brandon walked up to her and took her hand.

"Mrs. Compton," said he, in a calm, resolute voice, "your timidity has been your curse. There is no need for fear now. I will protect you. The man whom you have feared so many years is now ruined, helpless, and miserable. I could destroy him at this moment if I chose. You are foolish if you fear him. Your son is with you. His arm supports you, and I stand here ready to protect both you and your son. Speak out, and tell what you know. Your husband is still living. He longs for your return. You and your son are free from your enemies. Trust in me, and you shall both go back to him and live in peace."

Tears fell from Mrs. Compton's eyes. She seized Brandon's hand and pressed it to her thin lips.

"You will protect me?" said she.

"Yes."

"You will save me from him?" she persisted, in a voice of agony.

"Yes, and from all others like him. Do not fear. Speak out."

Mrs. Compton clung to the arm of her son. She drew a long breath. She looked up into his face as though to gain courage, and then began.

It was a long story. She had been attendant and nurse to the wife of Colonel Despard, who had died in giving birth to a child. Potts had brought news of her death, but had said nothing whatever about the child. Colonel Despard knew nothing of it. Being at a distance at the time, on duty, he had heard but the one fact of his wife's death, and all other things were forgotten. He had not even made inquiries as to whether the child which he had expected was alive or dead, but had at once given way to the grief of the bereavement, and had hurried off.

In his designs on Colonel Despard, Potts had decided that the knowledge of the existence of a child might keep him in India, and distract his mind from its sorrow. Therefore he was the more anxious not only to keep this secret, but also to prevent it from ever being known to Colonel Despard. With this idea he hurried the preparation of the *Vishnu* to such an extent that it was ready for sea almost immediately, and left with Colonel Despard on that ill-fated voyage.

Mrs. Compton had been left in India with the child. Her son joined her, in company with John, who, though only a boy, had the vices of a grown man. Months passed before Potts came back. He then took her along with the child to China, and left the latter with a respectable woman at Hong Kong, who was the widow of a British naval officer. The child was Beatrice Despard.

Potts always feared that Mrs. Compton might divulge his secret, and therefore always kept her with him. Timid by nature to an unusual degree, the wretched woman was in constant fear for her life, and as years passed on this fear was not lessened. The sufferings which she felt from this terror were atoned for, however, by the constant presence of her son, who remained in connection with Potts, influenced chiefly by the ascendency which this villain had over a man of his weak and timid nature. Potts had brought them to

England, and they had lived in different places, until at last Brandon Hall had fallen into his hands. Of the former occupants of Brandon Hall, Mrs. Compton knew almost nothing. Very little had ever been said about them to her. She knew scarcely any thing about them, except that their names were Brandon, and that they had suffered misfortunes.

Finally, this Beatrice was Beatrice Despard, the daughter of Colonel Despard and the sister of the clergyman then present. She herself, instead of being the daughter of Potts, had been one of his victims, and had suffered not the least at his hands.

This astounding revelation was checked by frequent interruptions. The actual story of her true parentage overwhelmed Beatrice. This was the awful thought which had occurred to herself frequently before. This was what had moved her so deeply in reading the manuscript of her father on that African Isle. This also was the thing which had always made her hate with such intensity the miscreant who pretended to be her father.

Now she was overwhelmed. She threw herself into the arms of her brother and wept upon his breast. Courtenay Despard for a moment rose above the gloom that oppressed him, and pressed to his heart this sister so strangely discovered. Brandon stood apart, looking on, shaken to the soul and unnerved by the deep joy of that unparalleled discovery. Amidst all the speculations in which he had indulged the very possibility of this had never suggested itself. He had believed most implicitly all along that Beatrice was in reality the daughter of his mortal enemy. Now the discovery of the truth came upon him with overwhelming force.

She raised herself from her brother's embrace, and turned and looked upon the man whom she adored—the one who, as she said, had over and over again saved her life, the one whose life she, too, in her turn had saved, with whom she had passed so many adventurous and momentous days—days of alternating peace and storm, of varying hope and despair. To him she owed every thing; to him she owed even the rapture of this moment.

As their eyes met they revealed all their inmost thoughts. There was now no barrier between them. Vanished was the insuperable obstacle, vanished the impassable gulf. They stood side by side. The enemy of this man—his foe, his victim—was also hers. Whatever he might suffer, whatever anguish might have been on the face of that old man who had looked at her from the balcony, she had clearly no part nor lot now in that suffering or that anguish. He was the murderer of her father. She was not the daughter of this man. She was of no vulgar or sordid race. Her blood was no longer polluted or accursed. She was of pure and noble lineage. She was a Despard.

"Beatrice," said Brandon, with a deep, fervid emotion in his voice; "Beatrice, I am yours, and you are mine. Beatrice, it was a lie that kept us apart. My life is yours, and yours is mine."

He thought of nothing but her. He spoke with burning impetuosity. His words sank into her soul. His eyes devoured hers in the passion of their glance.

"Beatrice—my Beatrice!" he said, "Beatrice Despard—"

He spoke low, bending his head to hers. Her head sank toward his breast.

"Beatrice, do you now reproach me?" he murmured.

She held out her hand, while tears stood in her eyes. Brandon seized it and covered it with kisses. Despard saw this. In the midst of the anguish of his face a smile shone forth, like sunshine out of a clouded sky. He looked at these two for a moment.

Langhetti's eyes were closed. Mrs. Compton and her son were talking apart. Despard looked upon the lovers.

"Let them love," he murmured to himself; "let them love and be happy. Heaven has its favorites. I do not envy them; I bless them, though I love without hope. Heaven has its favorites, but I am an outcast from that favor."

A shudder passed through him. He drew himself up.

"Since love is denied me," he thought, "I can at least have vengeance."

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE MALAY'S VENGEANCE.

Some hours afterward Despard called Brandon outside the cottage, and walked along the bank which overhung the beach. Arriving at a point several hundred yards distant from the cottage he stopped. Brandon noticed a deeper gloom upon his face and a sterner purpose on his resolute mouth.

"I have called you aside," said Despard, "to say that I am going on a journey. I may be back immediately. If I do not return, will you say to any one who may ask"—and here he paused for a moment—"say to any one who may ask, that I have gone away on important business, and that the time of my coming is uncertain."

"I suppose you can be heard of at Holby, in case of need."

"I am never going back again to Holby."

Brandon looked surprised.

"To one like you," said Despard, "I do not object to tell my purpose. You know what it is to seek for vengeance. The only feeling that I have is that. Love, tenderness, affection, all are idle words with me.

"There are three who pre-eminently were concerned in my father's death," continued Despard. "One was Cigole. The Carbonari have him. Langhetti tells me that he must die, unless he himself interposes to save him. And I think Langhetti will never so interpose. Langhetti is dying—another stimulus to vengeance.

"The one who has been the cause of this is Clark, another one of my father's murderers. He is in the hands of the law. His punishment is certain.

"There yet remains the third, and the worst. Your vengeance is satisfied on him. Mine is not. Not even the sight of that miscreant in the attitude of a bereaved father could for one moment move me to pity. I took note of the agony of his face. I watched his grief with joy. I am going to complete that joy. He must die, and no mortal can save him from my hands."

The deep, stern tones of Despard were like the knell of doom, and there was in them such determinate vindictiveness that Brandon saw all remonstrance to be useless.

He marked the pale sad face of this man. He saw in it the traces of sorrow of longer standing than any which he might have felt about the manuscript that he had read. It was the face of a man who had suffered so much that life had become a burden.

"You are a clergyman," said Brandon at length, with a faint hope that an appeal to his profession might have some effect.

Despard smiled cynically.

"I am a man," said he.

"Can not the discovery of a sister," asked Brandon, "atone in some degree for your grief about your father?"

Despard shook his head wearily.

"No," said he, "I must do something, and only one purpose is before me now. I see your motive. You wish to stop short of taking that devil's life. It is useless to remonstrate. My mind is made up. Perhaps I may come back unsuccessful. If so—I must be resigned, I suppose. At any rate you know my purpose, and can let those who ask after me know, in a general way, what I have said."

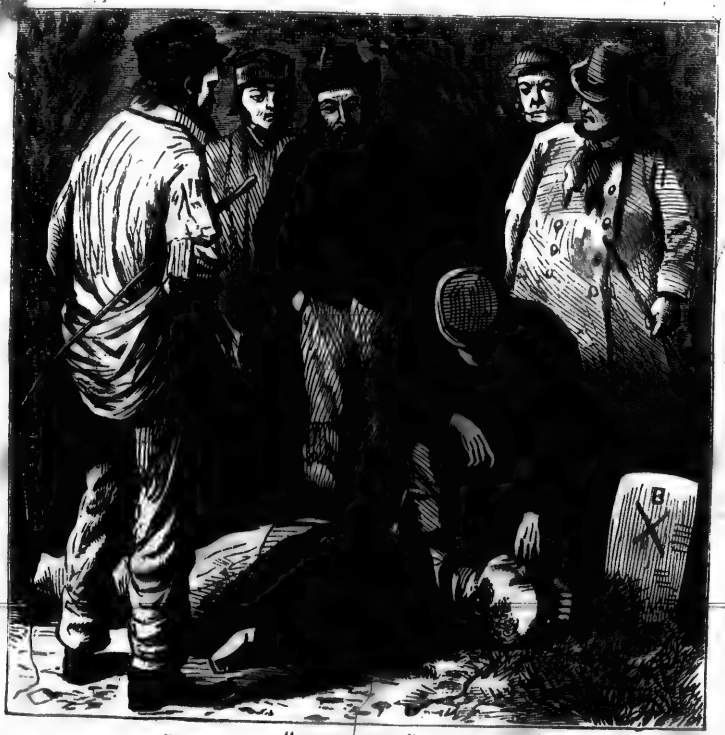
With a slight bow Despard walked away, leaving Brandon standing there filled with thoughts which were half mournful, half remorseful.

On leaving Brandon Despard went at once to the inn. The crowd without had dwindled away to half a dozen people, who were still talking about the one event of the day. Making his way through these he entered the inn.

The landlord stood there with a puzzled face, discussing with several friends the case of the day. More particularly he was troubled by the sudden departure of the old man, who about an hour previously had started off in a great hurry, leaving no directions whatever as to what was to be done with the body up stairs. It was this which now perplexed the landlord.

Despard listened attentively to the conversation. The landlord mentioned that Potts had taken the road to Brandon. The servant who had been with the young man had not been seen. If the old man should not return what was to be done?

This was enough for Despard, who had his horse saddled without delay and started also on the Brandon road. He rode on swiftly for some time, hoping to overtake the man whom he pursued. He rode, however, several miles without coming in sight of him or of any one like



"IT WAS POTTS."

him. At last he reached that hollow which had been the scene of his encounter with Clark. As he descended into it he saw a group of men by the road-side surrounding some object. In the middle of the road was a farmer's wagon, and a horse was standing in the distance.

Despard rode up and saw the prostrate figure of a man. He dismounted. The farmers stood aside and disclosed the face.

It was Potts.

Despard stooped down. It was already dusk; but even in that dim light he saw the coils of a thin cord wound tightly about the neck of this victim, from one end of which a leaden bullet hung down.

By that light also he saw the hilt of a weapon which had been plunged into his heart, from which the blood had flowed in torrents.

It was a Malay creese. Upon the handle was carven a name:

JOHN POTTS.

CHAPTER LIX.

Δεῦτε τελευταῖον ἄσπασμον δῶμεν.

THE excitement which had prevailed through the village of Denton was intensified by the arrival there of the body of the old man. For his mysterious death no one could account except one person.

That one was Brandon, whom Despard surprised by his speedy return, and to whom he narrated the circumstances of the discovery. Brandon knew who it was that could wield that cord, what arm it was that had held that weapon, and what heart it was that was animated by sufficient vengeance to strike these blows.

Despard, finding his purpose thus unexpectedly taken away, remained in the village and waited. There was one whom he wished to see again. On the following day Frank Brandon arrived from London. He met Langhetti with deep emotion, and learned from his brother the astonishing story of Edith.

On the following day that long-lost sister herself appeared in company with Mrs. Thornton. Her form, always fragile, now appeared frailer than ever, her face had a deeper pallor, her eyes an intenser lustre, her expression was more unearthly. The joy which the brothers felt at finding their sister was subdued by an involuntary awe which was inspired by her presence. She seemed to them as she had seemed to others, like one who had arisen from the dead.

At the sight of her Langhetti's face grew radiant—all pain seemed to leave him. She bent over him, and their wan lips met in the only kiss which they had ever exchanged, with all that deep love which they had felt for one another. She sat by his bedside. She seemed to appropriate him to herself. The others acknowledged this quiet claim and gave way to it.

As she kissed Langhetti's lips he murmured faintly:

"I knew you would come."

"Yes," said Edith. "We will go together."

"Yes, sweetest and dearest," said Langhetti. "And therefore we meet now never to part again."

She looked at him fondly.

"The time of our deliverance is near, oh my friend."

"Near," repeated Langhetti, with a smile of ecstasy—"near. Yes, you have already by your presence brought me nearer to my immortality."

Mrs. Thornton was pale and wan; and the shock which she felt at the sight of her brother at first overcame her.

Despard said nothing to her through the day, but as evening came on he went up to her and in a low voice said, "Let us take a walk."

Mrs. Thornton looked at him earnestly, and then put on her bonnet. It was quite dark as they left the house. They walked along the road. The sea was on their left.

"This is the last that we shall see of one another, Little Playmate," said Despard, after a long silence. "I have left Holby forever."

"Left Holby! Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Thornton, anxiously.

"To join the army."

"The army!"

"Little Playmate," said Despard, "even my discovery of my father's death has not changed me. Even my thirst for vengeance could not take the place of my love. Listen—I flung myself with all the ardor that I could command into the pursuit of my father's murderers. I forced myself to an unnatural pitch of pitilessness and vindictiveness. I set out to pursue one of the worst of these men with the full determination to kill him. God saved me from blood-guiltiness. I found the man dead in the road. After this all my passion for vengeance died out, and I was brought face to face with the old love and the old despair. But each of us would die rather than do wrong, or go on in a wrong course. The only thing left for us is to separate forever."

"Yes, forever," murmured Mrs. Thornton.

"Ah, Little Playmate," he continued, taking her hand, "you are the one who was not only my sweet companion but the bright ideal of my youth. You always stood transfigured in my eyes. You, Teresa, were in my mind something perfect—a bright, brilliant being unlike any other. Whether you were really what I believed you mattered not so far as the effect upon me was concerned. You were at once a real and an ideal being. I believed in you, and believe in you yet.

"I was not a lover; I was a devotee. My feelings toward you are such as Dante describes his feelings toward his Beatrice. My love is tender and reverential. I exalt you to a plane above my own. What I say may sound extravagant to you, but it is actual fact with me. Why it should be so I can not tell. I can only say—I am so made.

"We part, and I leave you; but I shall be like Dante, I suppose, and as the years pass, instead of weakening my love they will only refine it and purify it. You will be to me a guardian angel, a patron saint—your name shall always mingle with my prayers. Is it impious to name your name in prayer? I turn away from you because I would rather suffer than do wrong. May I not pray for my darling?"

"I don't know what to do," said Mrs. Thornton, wearily. "Your power over me is fearful. Love, I would do any thing for your sake. You talk about your memories; it is not for me to speak about mine. Whether you idealize

"SHE WAS WEEPING. DESPARD FOLDED HER IN HIS ARMS."

me or not, after all, you must know what I really am."

"Would you be glad never to see me again?"

The hand which Despard held trembled.

"If you would be happier," said she.

"Would you be glad if I could conquer this love of mine, and meet you again as coolly as a common friend?"

"I want you to be happy, Lama," she replied. "I would suffer myself to make you happy."

She was weeping. Despard folded her in his arms.

"This once," said he, "the only time, Little Playmate, in this life."

She wept upon his breast.

"Τελευταῖον ἀσπασμον δῶμεν," said Despard, murmuring in a low voice the opening of the song of the dead, so well known, so often sung, so fondly remembered—the song which bids farewell to the dead when the friends bestow the "last kiss."

He bent down his head. Her head fell. His lips touched her forehead.

She felt the beating of his heart; she felt his frame tremble from head to foot; she heard his deep-drawn breathing, every breath a sigh.

"It is our last farewell," said he, in a voice of agony.

Then he tore himself away, and, a few minutes later, was riding from the village.

CHAPTER LX.

CONCLUSION.

A MONTH passed. Despard gave no sign. A short note which he wrote to Brandon announced his arrival at London, and informed him that important affairs required his departure abroad.

The cottage was but a small place, and Brandon determined to have Langhetti conveyed to the Hall. An ambulance was obtained from Exeter, and on this Langhetti and Edith were taken away.

On arriving at Brandon Hall Beatrice found her diary in its place of concealment, the memory of old sorrows which could never be forgotten. But those old sorrows were passing away now, in the presence of her new joy.

And yet that joy was darkened by the cloud of a new sorrow. Langhetti was dying. His

frail form became more and more attenuated every day, his eyes more lustrous, his face more spiritual. Down every step of that way which led to the grave Edith went with him, seeming in her own face and form to promise a speedier advent in that spirit-world where she longed to arrive. Beside these Beatrice watched, and Mrs. Thornton added her tender care.

Day by day Langhetti grew worse. At last one day he called for his violin. He had caused it to be sent for on a previous occasion, but had never used it. His love for music was satisfied by the songs of Beatrice. Now he wished to exert his own skill with the last remnants of his strength.

Langhetti was propped up by pillows, so that he might hold the instrument. Near him Edith reclined on a sofa. Her large, lustrous eyes were fixed on him. Her breathing, which came and went rapidly, showed her utter weakness and prostration.

Langhetti drew his bow across the strings.

It was a strange, sweet sound, weak, but sweet beyond all words—a long, faint, lingering tone, which rose and died and rose again, bearing away the souls of those who heard it into a realm of enchantment and delight.

That tone gave strength to Langhetti. It was as though some unseen power had been invoked and had come to his aid. The tones came forth more strongly, on firmer pinions, flying from the strings and towering through the air.

The strength of these tones seemed to emanate from some unseen power; so also did their meaning. It was a meaning beyond what might be intelligible to those who listened—a meaning beyond mortal thought.

Yet Langhetti understood it, and so did Edith. Her eyes grew brighter, a flush started to her wan cheeks, her breathing grew more rapid.

The music went on. More subtle, more penetrating, more thrilling in its mysterious meaning, it rose and swelled through the air, like the song of some unseen ones, who were waiting for newcomers to the Invisible land.

Suddenly Beatrice gave a piercing cry. She rushed to Edith's sofa. Edith lay back, her marble face motionless, her white lips apart, her eyes looking upward. But the lips breathed no more, and in the eyes there no longer beamed the light of life.

At the cry of Beatrice the violin fell from Langhetti's hand, and he sank back. His face was turned toward Edith. He saw her and knew it all.

He said not a word, but lay with his face turned

"LANGHETTI DREW HIS BOW ACROSS THE STRINGS."

toward her. They wished to carry her away, but he gently reproved them.

"Wait!" he murmured. "In a short time you will carry away another also. Wait."

They waited.

An hour before midnight all was over. They had passed—those pure spirits, from a world which was uncongenial to a fairer world and a purer clime.

They were buried side by side in the Brandon vaults. Frank then returned to London. Mrs. Thornton went back to Holby. The new rector was surprised at the request of the lady of Thornton Grange to be allowed to become organist in Trinity Church. She offered to pension off the old man who now presided there. Her request was gladly acceded to. Her zeal was remarkable. Every day she visited the church to practice at the organ. This became the purpose of her life. Yet of all the pieces two were performed most frequently in her daily practice, the one being the Agnus Dei; the other, the τελευταῖον ἄσπασμον of St. John Damascene. Peace! Peace! Peace!

Was that cry of hers unavailing? Of Despard nothing was known for some time. Mr. Thornton once mentioned to his wife that the Rev. Courtenay Despard had joined the Eleventh Regiment, and had gone to South Africa. He mentioned this because he had seen a paragraph stating that a Captain Despard had been killed in the Kaffir war, and wondered whether it could by any possibility be their old friend or not.

At Brandon Hall, the one who had been so long a prisoner and a slave soon became mistress. The gloom which had rested over the house was dispelled, and Brandon and his wife were soon able to look back, even to the darkest period of their lives, without fear of marring their perfect happiness.

THE END.

TH

I

AUTHOR

HA

THE DODGE CLUB;

OR,

ITALY IN MDCCCLIX.

By JAMES DE MILLE,

AUTHOR OF "CORD AND CREESE; OR, THE BRANDON MYSTERY," ETC., ETC.

With One Hundred Illustrations.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1872.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1869, by

HARPER & BROTHERS,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New York.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PARIS.—THE DODGE CLUB.—HOW TO SPEAK FRENCH.—HOW TO RAISE A CROWD..... 5

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Dick!—Here I Invite my Friends.—The Club.—The Place Vendôme.—Keep it, Buttons!

CHAPTER II.

ORLEANS.—HOW TO QUELL A LANDLORD.—HOW TO FIGHT OFF HUMBUGS; AND HOW TO TRAVEL WITHOUT BAGGAGE..... 10

ILLUSTRATIONS.—That's a Hotel Bill.—Cicero against Verres.—Sac-r-r-r-re!

CHAPTER III.

THE RHONE IN A RAIN.—THE MAD FRENCHMAN.—SUICIDE A CAPITAL CRIME IN FRANCE... 13

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Number 729.—Horror! Despair!

CHAPTER IV.

MARSEILLES..... 14

CHAPTER V.

THE RETIRED ORGAN-GRINDER.—THE SENATOR PHILOSOPHIZES.—EVILS OF NOT HAVING A PASSPORT..... 15

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Those Italians.—Genoa, the Superb.

CHAPTER VI.

LAZARONI AND MACARONI..... 17

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Their Noble Excellencies.—Lazaroni and Macaroni.

CHAPTER VII.

DOLORES.—AN ITALIAN MAID LEARNS ENGLISH.—A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE.—A MASQUERADE, AND WHAT BEFELL THE SENATOR.—A CHARMING DOMINO.—A MOONLIGHT WALK, AND AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY..... 19

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Yankee Doodle.—I Kiss Hands.—The Young Hussar.—A Perplexed Senator.—Exit Senator.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADVENTURES AND MISADVENTURES.—A WET GROTTO AND A BOILING LAKE.—THE TWO FAIR SPANIARDS, AND THE DONKEY RIDE..... 24

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Darn it! Don't.—Thump!—A Trying Moment.—Senator and Donkey.

CHAPTER IX.

A DRIVE INTO THE COUNTRY.—A FIGHT WITH A VETTURINO.—THE EFFECT OF EATING "HARD BOILED EGGS."—WHAT THEY SAW AT PÆSTUM.—FIVE TEMPLES AND ONE "MILL."..... 28

ILLUSTRATIONS.—"Do You See That?"—The Mill at Pæstum.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE WATER, WHERE BUTTONS SEES A LOST IDEA AND GIVES CHASE TO IT, TOGETHER WITH THE HEART-SICKENING RESULTS THEREOF. 32

ILLUSTRATIONS.—The Spaniards.—"A Thousand Pardons!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE SENATOR HAS SUCH A FANCY FOR SEEKING USEFUL INFORMATION!—CURIOUS POSITION OF A WISE, AND WELL-KNOWN, AND DESERVEDLY-POPULAR LEGISLATOR, AND UNDIGNIFIED MODE OF HIS ESCAPE..... 35

ILLUSTRATION.—The Senator.

CHAPTER XII.

HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII, AND ALL THAT THE SIGHT OF THOSE FAMOUS PLACES PRODUCED ON THE MINDS OF THE DODGE CLUB..... 37

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Villa of Diomedes.—Phew!—A Street in Pompeii.

CHAPTER XIII.

VESUVIUS.—WONDERFUL ASCENT OF THE CONE.—WONDERFUL DESCENT INTO THE CRATER.—AND MOST WONDERFUL DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. FIGGS, AFTER WHOM ALL HIS FRIENDS GO, WITH THEIR LIVES IN THEIR HANDS.—GREAT SENSATION AMONG SPECTATORS..... 40

ILLUSTRATIONS.—The Ascent of Vesuvius.—The Descent of Vesuvius.—Where's Figgs?—Mr. Figgs.—The Ladies.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAGNIFICENT ATTITUDE OF THE SENATOR; BRILLIANCY OF BUTTONS; AND PLUCK OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CLUB: BY ALL OF WHICH THE GREATEST EFFECTS ARE PRODUCED. 47

ILLUSTRATIONS.—The Bandits Captured.—Sold.

CHAPTER XV.

DOLORES ONCE MORE.—A PLEASANT CONVERSATION.—BUTTONS LEARNS MORE OF HIS YOUNG FRIEND.—AFFECTING FAREWELL..... 50

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Two Piastres!—The Brave Soldier.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK RELATES A FAMILY LEGEND..... 53

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Buying a Whale.—The Long-lost Son.

CHAPTER XVII.

NIGHT ON THE ROAD.—THE CLUB ASLEEP.—THEY ENTER ROME.—THOUGHTS ON APPROACHING AND ENTERING "THE ETERNAL CITY."..... 56

ILLUSTRATION.—To Rome.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LETTER BY DICK, AND CRITICISMS OF HIS FRIENDS..... 56

CHAPTER XIX.

ST. PETER'S!—THE TRAGIC STORY OF THE FAT MAN IN THE BALL.—HOW ANOTHER TRAGEDY NEARLY HAPPENED.—THE WOES OF MEINHERR SCHATT..... 57

ILLUSTRATION.—"Gracious Me!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE GLORY, GRANDEUR, BEAUTY, AND INFINITE VARIETY OF THE PINCIAN HILL; NARRATED AND DETAILED NOT COLUMNARILY BUT EXHAUSTIVELY, AND AFTER THE MANNER OF RABELAIS..... 60

CHAPTER XXI.

HARMONY ON THE PINCIAN HILL.—MUSIC HATH CHARMS.—AMERICAN MELODIES.—THE GLORY, THE POWER, AND THE BEAUTY OF YANKEE DOODLE, AND THE MERCENARY SOUL OF AN ITALIAN ORGAN-GRINDER..... 60

ILLUSTRATION.—Old Virginny.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW A BARGAIN IS MADE.—THE WILES OF THE ITALIAN TRADESMAN.—THE NAKED SULKY BEGGAR, AND THE JOVIAL WELL-CLAD BEGGAR.—WHO IS THE KING OF BEGGARS?... 62

ILLUSTRATION.—The Shrug.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MANIFOLD LIFE OF THE CAFÉ NUOVO, AND HOW THEY RECEIVED THE NEWS ABOUT MAGENTA.—EXCITEMENT.—ENTHUSIASM.—TEARS.—EMBRACES..... 64

ILLUSTRATION.—News of Magenta!

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHECKMATE!..... 65

ILLUSTRATION.—Before and After.

CHAPTER XXV.

BUTTONS A MAN OF ONE IDEA.—DICK AND HIS MEASURING TAPE.—DARK EYES.—SUSCEPTIBLE HEART.—YOUNG MAIDEN WHO LIVES OUT OF TOWN.—GRAND COLLISION OF TWO ABSTRACTED LOVERS IN THE PUBLIC STREETS. 66

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Away!—Pepita.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONSEQUENCES OF BEING GALLANT IN ITALY, WHERE THERE ARE LOVERS, HUSBANDS, BROTHERS, FATHERS, COUSINS, AND INNUMERABLE OTHER RELATIVES AND CONNECTIONS, ALL READY WITH THE STILETTO..... 69

ILLUSTRATION.—An Interruption.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DICK ON THE SICK LIST.—RAPTURE OF BUTTONS AT MAKING AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.... 71

ILLUSTRATION.—Poor Dick!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHAT KIND OF A LETTER THE SENATOR WROTE FOR THE "NEW ENGLAND PATRIOT," WHICH SHOWS A TRUE, LIBERAL, UNBIASED, PLAIN, UNVARNISHED VIEW OF ROME..... 73

ILLUSTRATION.—Sketches by a Friend.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LONELY ONE AND HIS COMFORTER.—THE TRUE MEDICINE FOR A SICK MAN..... 75

CHAPTER XXX.

OCCUPATIONS AND PEREGRINATIONS OF BUTTONS..... 77

ILLUSTRATION.—Buttons and Murray.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BUTTONS ACTS THE GOOD SAMARITAN, AND LITERALLY UNEARTHS A MOST UNEXPECTED VICTIM OF AN ATROCIOUS ROBBERY.—GR-R-R-CIOUS ME!..... 77

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER DISCOVERY MADE BY BUTTONS... 78

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Βρεκεκέκ κοάξ κοάξ κοάξ..... 79

ILLUSTRATION.—Brekekekek Koax Koax!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SENATOR PURSUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS.—AN INTELLIGENT ROMAN TOUCHES A CHORD IN THE SENATOR'S HEART THAT VIBRATES.—RESULTS OF THE VIBRATION.—A VISIT FROM THE ROMAN POLICE; AND THE GREAT RACE DOWN THE CORSO BETWEEN THE SENATOR AND A ROMAN SPY.—GLEE OF THE POPULACE!—HI! HI!.... 80

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Got You There!—Walking Spanish.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DICK MAKES ANOTHER EFFORT, AND BEGINS TO FEEL ENCOURAGED..... 83

ILLUSTRATION.—Dick Thinks it Over.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHOWING HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO GET A LAUNDRESS, FOR THE SENATOR WANTED ONE, AND

NOT KNOWING THE LANGUAGE GOT INTO A SCRAPE, NOT BY HIS OWN FAULT, FOR HE WAS CAREFUL ABOUT COMMITTING HIMSELF WITH THE LADIES; BUT PRAY, WAS IT HIS FAULT IF THE LADIES WOULD TAKE A FANCY TO HIM?..... 85

ILLUSTRATIONS.—The Senator in a Bad Fix.—The Senator in a Worse Fix.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Rome.—Ancient History.—THE PREHISTORIC ERA.—CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF NIEBUHR AND HIS SCHOOL.—THE EARLY HISTORY OF ROME PLACED ON A RIGHT BASIS.—EXPLANATION OF HISTORY OF REPUBLIC.—NAPOLEON'S "CÆSAR."—THE IMPERIAL REGIME.—THE NORTHERN BARBARIANS.—RISE OF THE PAPACY.—MEDIÆVAL ROME.

Topography.—TRUE ADJUSTMENT OF BOUNDS OF ANCIENT CITY.—ITS PROBABLE POPULATION.—*Geology.*—EXAMINATION OF FORMATION.—TUFA TRAVERTINE.—ROMAN CEMENT.—TERRACOTTA.—*Special consideration of Roman Catacombs.*—BOSIO.—ARRINGHI.—CARDINAL WISEMAN.—RECENT EXPLORATIONS, INVESTIGATIONS, EXAMINATIONS, EXHUMATIONS, AND RESUSCITATIONS.—EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY SET ON A TRUE BASIS.—RELICS.—MARTYRS.—REAL ORIGIN OF CATACOMBS.—TRUE AND RELIABLE EXTENT (WITH MAPS).

Remarks on Art.—THE RENAISSANCE.—THE EARLY PAINTERS: CIMABUE, GIOTTO, PERUGINO, RAFAELLE SANZIO, MICHELANGELO BUONAROTTI.—THE TRANSFIGURATION.—THE MOSES OF MICHELANGELO.—BELLINI.—SAINT PETER'S, AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE COLONNADE.—THE LAST JUDGMENT.—DANTE.—THE MEDIÆVAL SPIRIT.—EFFECT OF GOTHIC ART ON ITALY AND ITALIAN TASTE.—COMPARISON OF LOMBARD WITH SICILIAN CHURCHES.—TO WHAT EXTENT ROME INFLUENCED THIS DEVELOPMENT.—THE FOSTERING SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH.—ALL MODERN ART CHRISTIAN.—WHY THIS WAS A NECESSITY.—FOLLIES OF MODERN CRITICS.—REYNOLDS AND RUSKIN.—HOW FAR POPULAR TASTE IS WORTH ANY THING.—CONCLUDING REMARKS OF A MISCELLANEOUS DESCRIPTION..... 88

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ITALIAN TRAVEL, ROADS, INNS.—A GRAND BREAKDOWN.—AN ARMY OF BEGGARS.—SIX MEN HUNTING UP A CARRIAGE WHEEL; AND PLANS OF THE SENATOR FOR THE GOOD OF ITALY. 88

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Travelling in Italy.—The Senator's Escort.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TRIUMPHANT PROGRESS OF DICK.—GENDARMES FOILED.—THE DODGE CLUB IS ATTACKED BY BRIGANDS, AND EVERY MAN OF IT COVERS HIMSELF WITH GLORY.—SCREAM OF THE AMERICAN EAGLE!..... 91

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Dick in his Glory.—Pietro.—The Barricade.

CHAPTER XL.

PLEASANT MEDITATIONS ABOUT THE WONDERS OF TOBACCO; AND THREE PLEASANT ANECDOTES BY AN ITALIAN BRIGAND..... 95

CHAPTER XLI.

FINAL ATTACK OF REINFORCEMENTS OF BRIGANDS.—THE DODGE CLUB DEFIES THEM AND REPELS THEM.—HOW TO MAKE A BARRICADE.—FRATERNIZATION OF AMERICAN EAGLE AND GALLIC COCK.—THERE'S NOTHING LIKE LEATHER..... 96

ILLUSTRATION.—An International Affair.

CHAPTER XLII.

FLORENCE.—DESPERATION OF BUTTONS, OF MR. FIGGS, AND OF THE DOCTOR..... 99

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Florence, from San Miniato.—Pitti Palace.—Fountain of Neptune, Palazzo Vecchio.—The Duomo.—The Campanile.—Strozzi Palace.—Buttons Melancholy.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SENATOR ENTRAPPED.—THE WILES AND WITCHERY OF A QUEEN OF SOCIETY.—HIS FATE DESTINED TO BE, AS HE THINKS, ITALIAN COUNTESSES.—SENTIMENTAL CONVERSATION.—POETRY.—BEAUTY.—MOONLIGHT.—RAPTURE.—DISTRACTION.—BLISS!..... 103

ILLUSTRATION.—La Cica.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"MORERE DIAGORA, NON ENIM IN CŒLUM ADSCENSURUS ES."—THE APOTHEOSIS OF THE SENATOR (NOTHING LESS—IT WAS A MOMENT IN WHICH A MAN MIGHT WISH TO DIE—THOUGH, OF COURSE, THE SENATOR DIDN'T DIE)..... 106

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Solferino!—The Senator Speaks.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE PRIVATE OPINION OF THE DOCTOR ABOUT FOREIGN TRAVEL.—BUTTONS STILL MEETS WITH AFFLICTIONS..... 109

ILLUSTRATIONS.—A Grease Spot.—Farewell, Figgs!

CHAPTER XLVI.

A MEMORABLE DRIVE.—NIGHT.—THE BRIGANDS ONCE MORE.—GARIBALDI'S NAME.—THE FIRE.—THE IRON BAR.—THE MAN FROM THE GRANITE STATE AND HIS TWO BOYS..... 111

ILLUSTRATIONS.—In the Coach.—A Free Fight.—Don't Speak.

CHAPTER XLVII.

BAD BRUISES, BUT GOOD MUSES.—THE HONORABLE SCARS OF DICK.—A KNOWLEDGE OF BONES..... 115

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SUFFERING AND SENTIMENT AT BOLOGNA.—MOONSHINE.—BEST BALM FOR WOUNDS..... 117

ILLUSTRATION.—Used Up.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CROSSING INTO THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY.—CONSTERNATION OF THE CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICERS..... 118

ILLUSTRATION.—Buttons in Bliss.

CHAPTER L.

VENICE AND ITS PECULIAR GLORY.—THE DODGE CLUB COME TO GRIEF AT LAST.—UP A TREE.—IN A NET, ETC..... 119

ILLUSTRATIONS.—Dick's Luggage.—Arrested.—Silence!

CHAPTER LI.

THE AMERICAN EAGLE AND THE AUSTRIAN DOUBLE-HEADED DITTO..... 122

ILLUSTRATION.—"Don't Try it On With Me!"

CHAPTER LII.

THE SENATOR STILL ENGAGED IN FACING DOWN THE AUSTRIAN.—THE AMERICAN CONSUL.—UNEXPECTED RE-APPEARANCE OF FORGOTTEN THINGS.—COLLAPSE OF THE COURT..... 124

ILLUSTRATION.—Watts Mis-spelled.

CHAPTER LIII.

A MYSTERIOUS FLIGHT.—DESPAIR OF BUTTONS.—PURSUIT.—HISTORIC GROUND, AND HISTORIC CITIES..... 126

ILLUSTRATION.—Formalities.

CHAPTER LIV.

DICK MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.—THE EMOTIONAL NATURE OF THE ITALIAN.—THE SENATOR OVERCOME AND DUMBFOUNDED..... 128

ILLUSTRATION.—The Count Ugo.

CHAPTER LV.

IN WHICH BUTTONS WRITES A LETTER; AND IN WHICH THE CLUB LOSES AN IMPORTANT MEMBER.—SMALL BY DEGREES AND BEAUTIFULLY LESS..... 129

CHAPTER LVI.

THE FAITHFUL ONE!—DARTS, DISTRACTION, LOVE'S VOWS, OVERPOWERING SCENE AT THE MEETING OF TWO FOND ONES.—COMPLETE BREAK-DOWN OF THE HISTORIAN..... 130

ILLUSTRATION.—The Door.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE DODGE CLUB IN PARIS ONCE MORE.—BUTTONS'S "JOLLY GOOD HEALTH."..... 132

ILLUSTRATION.—"He's a Jolly Good Fellow!"

THE DODGE CLUB; OR, ITALY IN MDCCCLIX.

DICK I.

CHAPTER I.

PARIS.—THE DODGE CLUB.—HOW TO SPEAK FRENCH.—HOW TO RAISE A CROWD.

It is a glorious day in Paris. The whole city is out in the public places, watching the departure of the army of Italy. Every imaginable uniform, on foot and on horseback, enlivens the scene. Zouaves are everywhere. Cent Gardes hurry to and fro, looking ferocious. Imperial Gardes look magnificent. Innumerable little, red-legged soldiers of the line dance about, gesticulating vehemently. Grisettes hang about the necks of departing braves. A great many tears are shed, and a great deal of bombast uttered. For the invincible soldiers of France are off to fight for an idea; and doesn't every one of them carry a marshal's baton in his knapsack?

A troop of Cent Gardes comes thundering down in a cloud of dust, dashing the people right and left. Loud cheers arise: "Vive l'Empereur!" The hoarse voices of myriads prolong the yell. It is Louis Napoleon. He touches his hat gracefully to the crowd.

A chasseur leaps into a cab.

"Where shall I take you?"

"To Glory!" shouts the soldier.

The crowd applaud. The cabman drives off and don't want any further direction.

Here a big-bearded Zouave kisses his big-bearded brother in a blouse.

"Adieu, mon frère; write me."

"Where shall I write?"

"Direct to Vienna—*poste restante*."

Everybody laughs at every thing, and the crowd are quite wild at this.

A young man is perched upon a pillar near the garden wall of the Tuileries. He enjoys the scene immensely. After a while he takes a clay pipe [illegible] his pocket and slowly fills it. Having completed this business he draws a match along the stone and is just about lighting his pipe.

"Hallo!"

Down drops the lighted match on the neck of an *ouvrier*. It burns. The man scowls up; but seeing the cause, smiles and waves his hand forgivingly.

"Dick!"

At this a young man in the midst of the crowd stops and looks around. He is a short young man, in whose face there is a strange mixture of innocence and shrewdness. He is

pulling a baby-carriage, containing a small specimen of French nationality, and behind him walks a majestic female.

The young man Dick takes a quick survey and recognizes the person who has called him. Down drops the pole of the carriage, and, to the horror of the majestic female, he darts off, and, springing up the pillar, grasps first the foot and then the hand of his friend.

"Buttons!" he cried; "what, you! you here in Paris!"

"I believe I am."

"Why, when did you come?"

"About a month ago."

"I had no idea of it. I didn't know you were here."

"And I didn't know that you were. I thought by this time that you were in Italy. What has kept you here so long?"

Dick looked confused.

"W[illegible] fact is, I am studying German."

"[illegible] in Paris! French, you mean."

"[illegible]an."

"[illegible]azy; who with?"

[illegible]d his head toward his late compan[illegible].

"Wh[illegible] that woman? How she is scowling at us!"

"Is she?" said Dick, with some trepidation.

"Yes. But don't look. Have you been with her all the time?"

"Yes, seven months."

"Studying German!" cried Buttons, with a laugh. "Who is she?"

"Madame Bang."

"Bang? Well, Madame Bang must look out for another lodger. You must come with me, young man. You need a guardian. It's well that I came in time to rescue you. Let's be off!"

And the two youths descended and were soon lost in the crowd.

"Three flights of steps are bad enough; but great Heavens! what do you mean by taking a fellow up to the eighth story?"

Such was the exclamation of Dick as he fell exhausted into a seat in a little room at the top of one of the tallest houses in Paris.

"Economy, my dear boy."

"Ehem!"

"Paris is overflowing, and I could get no other place without paying an enormous price. Now I am trying to husband my means."

"I should think so."

"I sleep here—"

"And have plenty of bedfellows."

"I eat here—"

"The powers of the human stomach are astounding."

"And here I invite my friends."

"Friends only, I should think. Nothing but the truest friendship could make a man hold out in such an ascent."

"But come. What are your plans?"

"I have none."

"Then you must league yourself with me."

"I shall be delighted."

"And I'm going to Italy."

"Then I'm afraid our league is already at an end."

"Why?"

"I haven't money enough."

"How much have you?"

"Only five hundred dollars; I've spent all the rest of my allowance."

"Five hundred? Why, man, I have only four hundred."

"What! and you're going to Italy?"

"Certainly."

"Then I'll go too and run the risk. But is this the style?" and Dick looked dolefully around.

"By no means—not always. But you must practice economy."

"Have you any acquaintances?"

"Yes, two. We three have formed ourselves into a society for the purpose of going to Italy. We call ourselves the Dodge Club."

"The Dodge Club?"

"Yes. Because our principle is to dodge all humbugs and swindles, which make travelling so expensive generally. We have gained much experience already, and hope to gain more. One of my friends is a doctor from Philadelphia, Doctor Snakeroot, and the other is Senator Jones from Massachusetts. Neither the Doctor nor the Senator understand a word of any lan-

HERE I INVITE MY FRIENDS.

guage but the American. That is the reason why I became acquainted with them.

"First as to the Doctor, I picked him up at Dunkirk. It was in a café. I was getting my modest breakfast when I saw him come in. He sat down and boldly asked for coffee. After the usual delay the garçon brought him a small cup filled with what looked like ink. On the waiter was a cup of *eau de vie*, and a little plate containing several enormous lumps of loaf-sugar. Never shall I forget the Doctor's face of amazement. He looked at each article in succession. What was the ink for? what the brandy? what the sugar? He did not know that the two first when mixed makes the best drink in the world, and that the last is intended for the pocket of the guest by force of a custom dear to every Frenchman. To make a long story short, I explained to him the mysteries of French coffee, and we became sworn friends.

"My meeting with the Senator was under slightly different circumstances. It was early in the morning. It was chilly. I was walking briskly out of town. Suddenly I turned a corner and came upon a crowd. They surrounded a tall man. He was an American, and appeared to be insane. First he made gestures like a man hewing or chopping. Then he drew his hand across his throat. Then he staggered forward and pretended to fall. Then he groaned heavily. After which he raised himself up and looked at the crowd with an air of mild inquiry. They did not laugh. They did not even smile. They listened respectfully, for they knew that the strange gentleman wished to express something. On the whole, I think if I hadn't come up that the Senator would have been arrested by a stiff gendarme who was just then coming along the street. As it was, I arrived just [illegible] time to learn that he was anxious to see [illegible] French mode of killing cattle, and was trying to find his way to the abattoirs. The Senator is a fine man, but eminently practical. He used to think the French language an accomplishment only. He has changed his mind since his arrival here. He has one little peculiarity, and that is, to bawl broken English at the top of his voice when he wants to communicate with foreigners."

Not long afterward the Dodge Club received a new member in the person of Mr. Dick Whiffletree. The introduction took place in a modest café, where a dinner of six courses was supplied for the ridiculous sum of one franc—soup, a roast, a fry, a bake, a fish, a pie, bread at discretion, and a glass of vinegar generously thrown in.

At one end of the table sat the Senator, a very large and muscular man, with iron-gray hair, and features that were very strongly marked and very strongly American. He appeared to be about fifty years of age. At the other sat the Doctor, a slender young man in black. On one side sat Buttons, and opposite to him was Dick.

"Buttons," said the Senator, "were you out yesterday?"

"I was."

"It was a powerful crowd."

"Rather large."

"It was im-mense. I never before had any idea of the population of Paris. New York isn't to be compared to it."

"As to crowds, that is nothing uncommon in Paris. Set a rat loose in the Champs Elysées, and I bet ten thousand people will be after it in five minutes."

"Sho!"

"Anything will raise a crowd in Paris."

"It will be a small one, then."

"My dear Senator, in an hour from this I'll engage myself to raise as large a crowd as the one you saw yesterday."

"My dear Buttons, you look like it."

"Will you bet?"

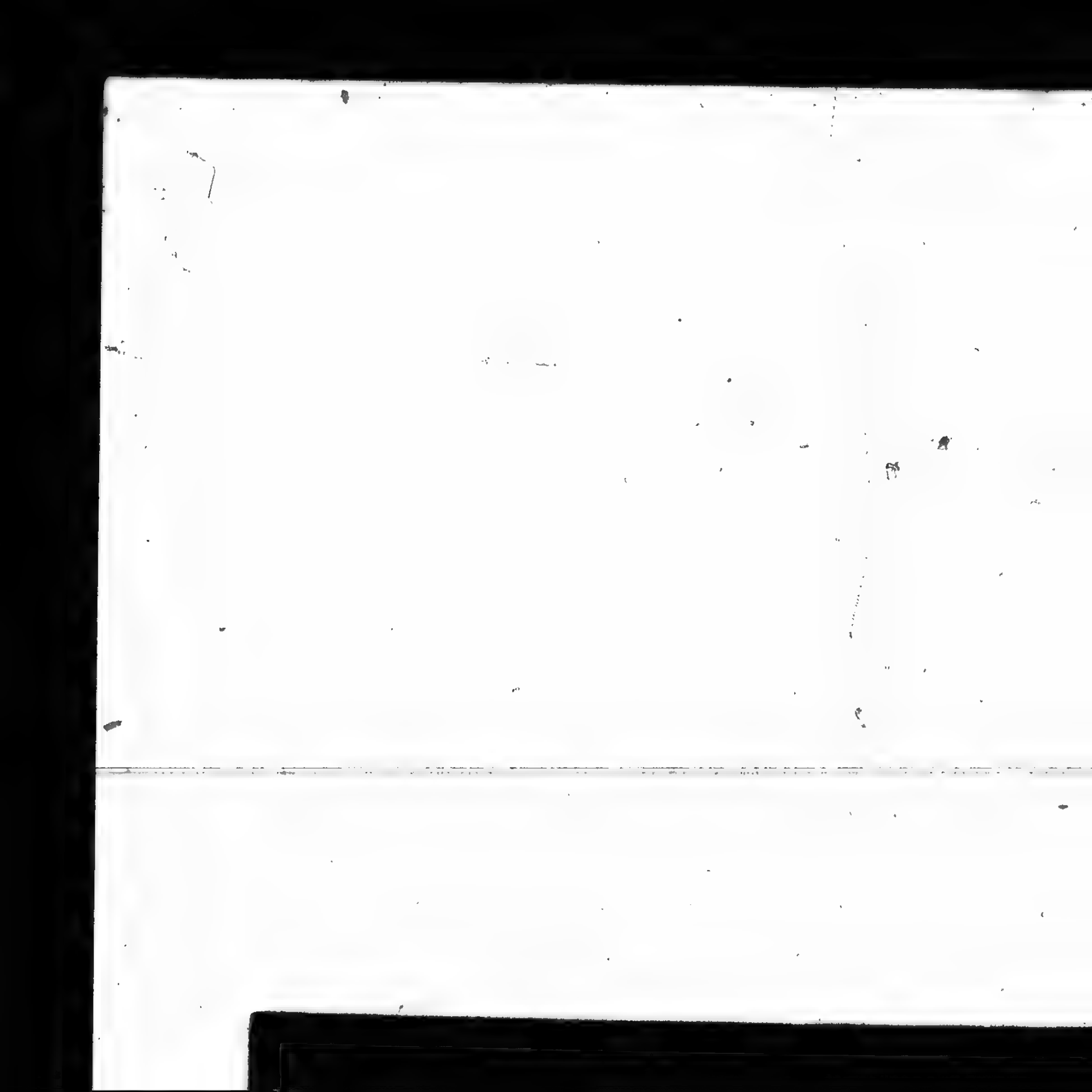
"Bet! Are you in earnest?"

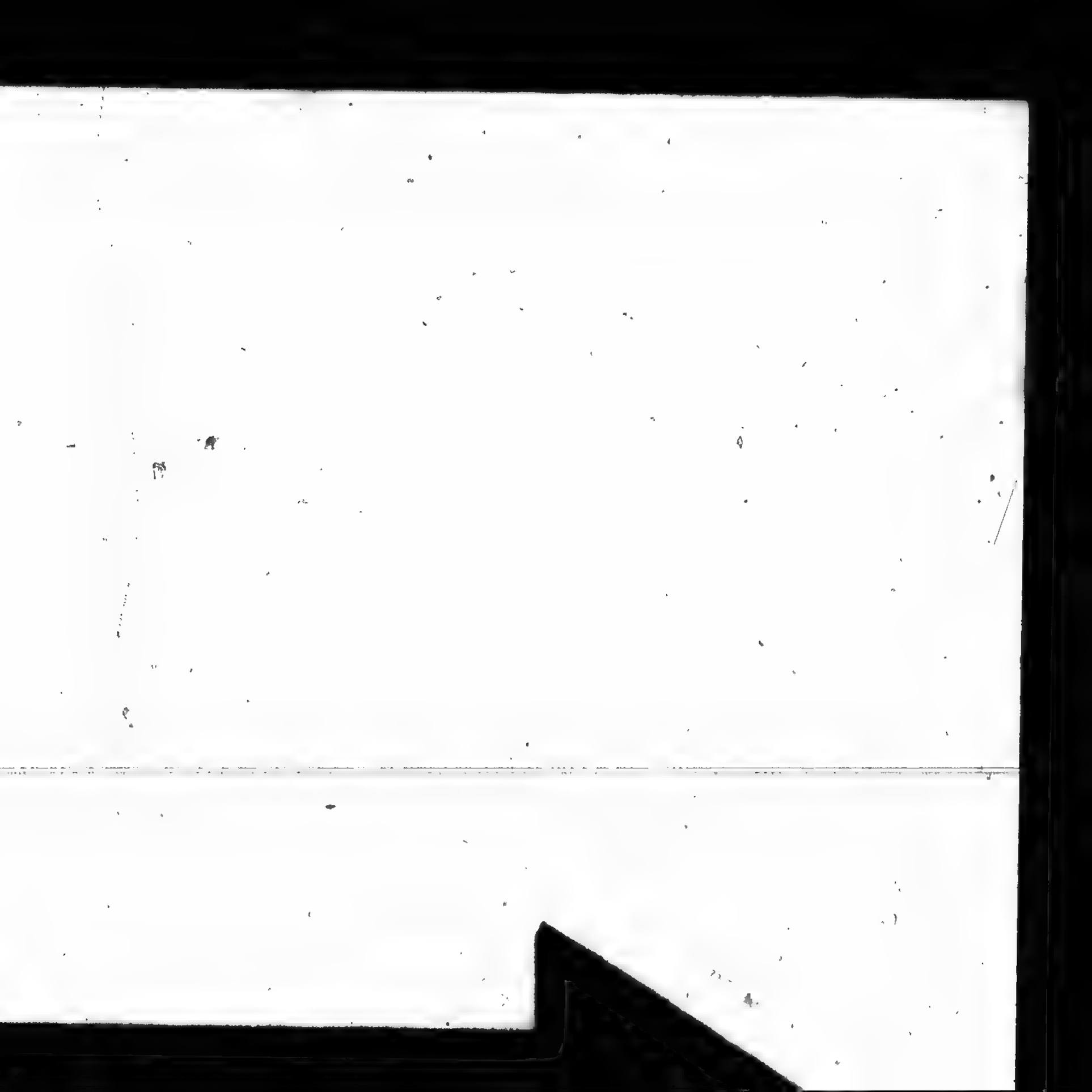
"Never more so."

"But there is an immense crowd outside already."

"Then let the scene of my trial be in a less crowded place—the Place Vendôme, for instance."

THE CLUB.





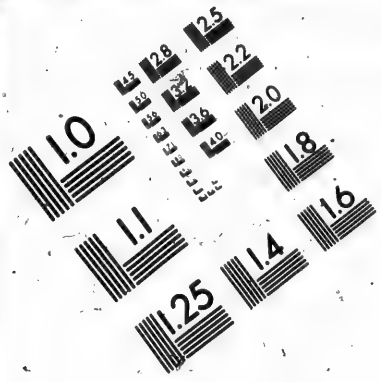
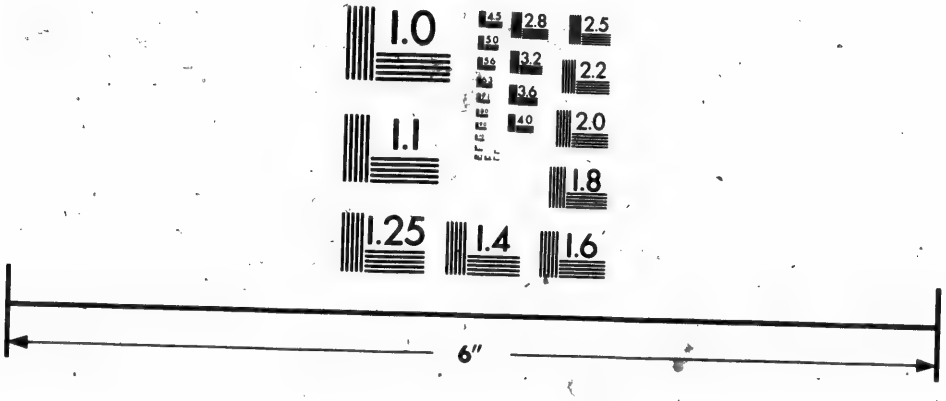
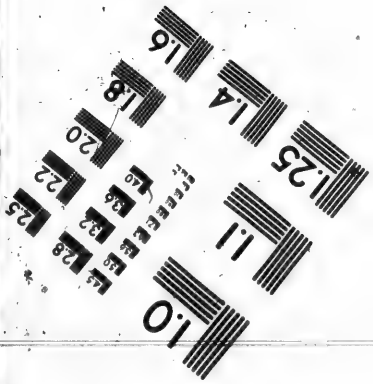
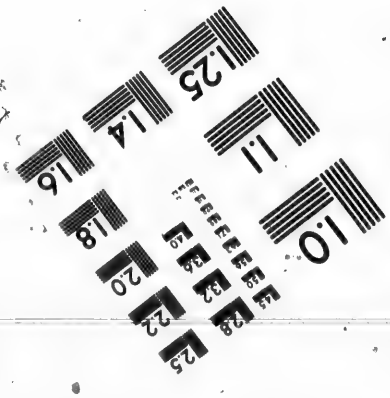


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

"Name the conditions."

"In an hour from this I engage to fill the Place Vendôme with people. Whoever fails forfeits a dinner to the Club."

The eyes of Dick and the Doctor sparkled.

"Done!" said the Senator.

"All that you have to do," said Buttons, "is to go to the top of the Colonne Vendôme and wave your hat three times when you want me to begin."

"I'll do that. But it's wrong," said the Senator. "It's taking money from you. You must lose."

"Oh, don't be alarmed," said Buttons, cheerfully.

The Dodge Club left for the Place Vendôme, and the Senator, separating himself from his companions, began the ascent. Buttons left his friends at a corner to see the result, and walked quickly down a neighboring street.

Dick noticed that every one whom he met stopped, stared, and then walked quickly forward, looking up at the column. These people accosted others, who did the same. In a few minutes many hundreds of people were looking up and exchanging glances with one another.

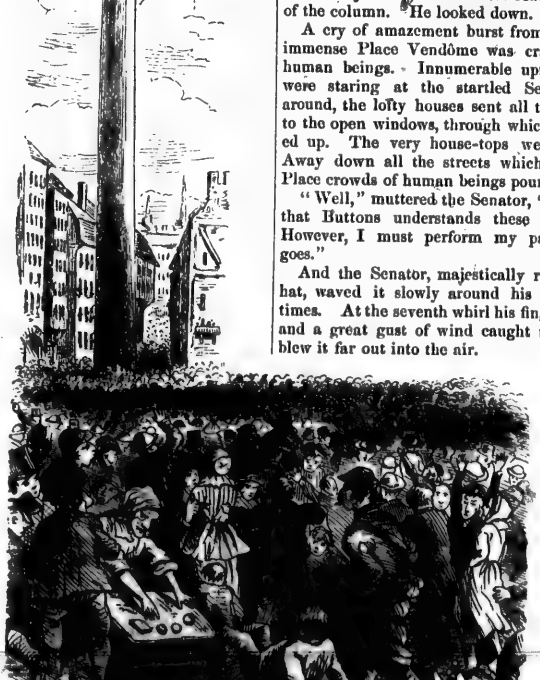
In a short time Buttons had completed the circuit of the block, and re-entered the Place by another street. He was running at a quick pace, and, at a moderate calculation, about two thousand *gamins de Paris* ran before, beside, and behind him. Gens d'armes caught the excitement, and rushed frantically about. Soldiers called to one another, and tore across the square gesticulating and shouting. Carriages stopped; the occupants stared up at the column; horsemen drew up their rearing horses; dogs barked; children screamed; up flew a thousand windows, out of which five thousand heads were thrust.

At the end of twenty minutes, after a very laborious journey, the Senator reached the top of the column. He looked down.

A cry of amazement burst from him. The immense Place Vendôme was crammed with human beings. Innumerable upturned faces were staring at the startled Senator. All around, the lofty houses sent all their inmates to the open windows, through which they looked up. The very house-tops were crowded. Away down all the streets which led to the Place crowds of human beings poured along.

"Well," muttered the Senator, "it's evident that Buttons understands these Frenchmen. However, I must perform my part, so here goes."

And the Senator, majestically removing his hat, waved it slowly around his head seven times. At the seventh whirl his fingers slipped, and a great gust of wind caught the hat and blew it far out into the air.



THE PLACE VENDÔME.

It fell.

A deep groan of horror burst forth from the multitude, so deep, so long, so terrible that the Senator turned pale.

A hundred thousand heads upturned; two hundred thousand arms waved furiously in the air. The tide of new-comers flowing up the other streets filled the Place to overflowing; and the vast host of people swayed to and fro, agitated by a thousand passions. All this was the work of but a short time.

"Come," said the Senator, "this is getting beyond a joke."

There was a sudden movement among the people at the foot of the column. The Senator leaned over to see what it was.

At once a great cry came up, like the thunder of a cataract, warningly, imperiously, terribly. The Senator drew back confounded.

Suddenly he advanced again. He shook his head deprecatingly, and waved his arms as if to disclaim any evil motives which they might impute to him. But they did not comprehend him. Scores of stiff gens d'armes, hundreds of little soldiers, stopped in their rush to the foot of the column to shake their fists and scream at him.

"Now if I only understood their doosid lingo," thought the Senator. "But"—after a pause—"it wouldn't be of no account up here. And what an awkward fix," he added, "for the father of a family to stand hatless on the top of a pillory like this! Sho!"

There came a deep rumble from the hollow stairway beneath him, which grew nearer and louder every moment.

"Somebody's coming," said the Senator. "Wa'al, I'm glad. Misery loves company. Perhaps I can purchase a hat."

In five minutes more the heads of twenty gens d'armes shot up through the opening in the top of the pillar, one after another, and reminded the Senator of the "Jump-up-Johnnies" in children's toys. Six of them seized him and made him prisoner.

The indignant Senator remonstrated, and informed them that he was an American citizen.

His remark made no impression. They did not understand English.

The Senator's wrath made his hair fairly bristle. He contented himself, however, with drawing up the programme of an immediate war between France and the Great Republic.

It took an hour for the column to get emptied. It was choked with people rushing up. Seven gentlemen fainted, and three escaped with badly sprained limbs. During this time the Senator remained in the custody of his captors.

At last the column was cleared.

The prisoner was taken down and placed in a cab. He saw the dense crowd and heard the mighty murmurs of the people.

He was driven away for an immense distance. It seemed miles.

At last the black walls of a huge edifice rose before him. The cab drove under a dark archway. The Senator thought of the dungeons of the Inquisition, and other Old World horrors of which he had heard in his boyhood.

So the Senator had to give the dinner. The Club enjoyed it amazingly.

Almost at the moment of his entrance Buttons had arrived, arm in arm with the American minister, whose representations and explanations procured the Senator's release.

"I wouldn't have minded it so much," said the Senator, from whose manly bosom the last trace of vexation had fled, "if it hadn't been for that darned policeman that collared me first. What a Providence it was that I didn't knock him down! Who do you think he was?"

"Who?"

"The very man that was going to arrest me the other day when I was trying to find my way to the slaughter-house. That man is my evil genius. I will leave Paris before another day."

"The loss of your hat completed my plans," said Buttons. "Was that done on purpose? Did you throw it down for the sake of saying 'Take my hat?'"

"No. It was the wind," said the Senator, innocently. "But how did you manage to raise the crowd? You haven't told us that yet."

"How? In the simplest way possible. I told every soul I met that a crazy man was going up the Colonne Vendôme to throw himself down."

A light burst in upon the Senator's soul. He raised his new hat from a chair, and placing it before Buttons, said fervently and with unction:

"Keep it, Buttons!"

KEEP IT, BUTTONS!

THAT'S A HOTEL BILL.

CHAPTER II.

ORLEANS.—HOW TO QUELL A LANDLORD.—HOW TO FIGHT OFF HUMBUGS; AND HOW TO TRAVEL WITHOUT BAGGAGE.

A TREMENDOUS uproar in the hall of a hotel at Orleans awaked every member of the Dodge Club from the sound and refreshing slumber into which they had fallen after a fatiguing journey from Paris.

Filing out into the hall one after another they beheld a singular spectacle.

It was a fat man, bald-headed, middle-aged, with a well-to-do look, that burst upon their sight.

He was standing in the hall with flushed face and stocking feet, swearing most frightfully. A crowd of waiters stood around shrugging their shoulders, and trying to soothe him. As the fat man spoke English, and the waiters French, there was a little misapprehension.

"There, gentlemen," cried the fat man, as he caught sight of our four friends, "look at that! What do you call that?"

"That?" said Buttons, taking a paper which the fat man thrust in his face, "why, that's a hotel bill."

"A hotel bill? Why it's an imposition!" cried the other excitedly.

"Perhaps it is," said Buttons, coolly.

"Of course it is! Read it out loud, and let these gentlemen see what they think of it."

"I'll read it in English," said Buttons, "for the benefit of the Club:"

Mister Blank,

To the Hotel du Rat:

One dinner.....	8 francs.	One bed.....	5 francs.
Six porters.....	6 "	One boots.....	1 "
One cab.....	2 "	One candle.....	1 "
One do.....	2 "	One candle.....	1 "
One information.	5 "	One candle.....	1 "
Wine.....	5 "	One candle.....	1 "
Tobacco.....	2 "		
			25 francs.

"By Jove! Thirty-five francs! My dear Sir, I quite agree with you. It's an imposition."

A deep sigh expressed the relief of the fat man at this mark of sympathy.

"There's no [illegible]," said Buttons. "You'll have to grin and bear it. For you must know that in these [illegible]owns hotel-keepers are in league, offensive and defensive, with all the cab-drivers, omnibus-drivers, postillions, truckmen, hostlers, porters, errand-boys, café-keepers, cicerones, tradesmen, lawyers, chambermaids, doctors, priests, soldiers, gens d'armes, magistrates, etc., etc., etc. In short, the whole community is a joint-stock company organized to plunder the unsuspecting traveller."

"And must I stand here and be swindled without a word?" cried the other.

"By no means. Row like fury. Call up the whole household one by one, and swear at them in broad Saxon. That's the way to strike terror into the soul of a Frenchman."

The fat man stared for a moment at Buttons, and then plunging his hands deep into his trowsers pockets he walked up and down the hall.

At last he turned to the others:

"Gentlemen, is this endurable?"

"Horrible!" cried Dick.

"Abominable!" the Doctor.

"Infamous!" the Senator.

"By jingo! I've a great mind to go home. If I've got to be plundered, I'd a durned sight rather have my money go to support our own great and glorious institutions."

There is no doubt that the unfortunate man would have had to pay up if it had not been for the energetic action of Buttons.

He summoned the hotel-keeper before him, and, closing the door, asked his friends to sit down.

Then Buttons, standing up, began to repeat to the hotel-keeper, smilingly, but with extraordinary volubility, Daniel Webster's oration against Hayne. The polite Frenchman would not interrupt him, but listened with a bland though somewhat dubious smile.

The Dodge Club did infinite credit to themselves by listening without a smile to the words of their leader.

Buttons then went through the proposition about the hypothenuse of a right-angled triangle, and appended the words of a few negro songs.

Here the worthy landlord interrupted him, begging his pardon, and telling him that he did not understand English very well, and could his Excellency speak French?

His Excellency, with equal politeness, regretted his want of complete familiarity with French. He was forced when he felt deeply on any subject to express himself in English.

Then followed Cicero's oration against Verres, and he was just beginning a speech of Chatham's when the landlord surrendered at discretion.

When, after the lapse of three hours and twenty-five minutes, the fat man held his bill toward him, and Buttons offered five francs, he did not even remonstrate, but took the money, and hastily receipting the bill with his pencil, darted from the room.

"Well," exclaimed the Senator, when he had recovered from the effects of the scene—"I never before realized the truth of a story I once heard."

"What was the story?"

"Oh, it was about a bet between a Yankee and a Frenchman, who could talk the longest. The two were shut up in a room. They remained there three days. At the end of that time their friends broke open the door and entered, and what do you think they found there?"

"Nobody?" suggested the fat man.

"No," said the Senator, with a glow of patriotic pride on his fine face. "But they found the Frenchman lying dead upon the floor, and the Yankee whispering in his ear the beginning of the second part of the Higgins story."

"And what is the Higgins story?"

"For Heaven's sake," gasped the Doctor, starting up, "don't ask him now—wait till next week!"

As they passed over the mountains of Auvergne a new member was added to the Dodge Club.

It was the fat man.

He was President of a Western bank.

His name was Figgs.

It was a damp, dull, dreary, drenching night, when the lumbering diligence bore the Dodge Club through the streets of Lyons and up to the door of their hotel. Seventeen men and five small boys stood bowing ready to receive them.

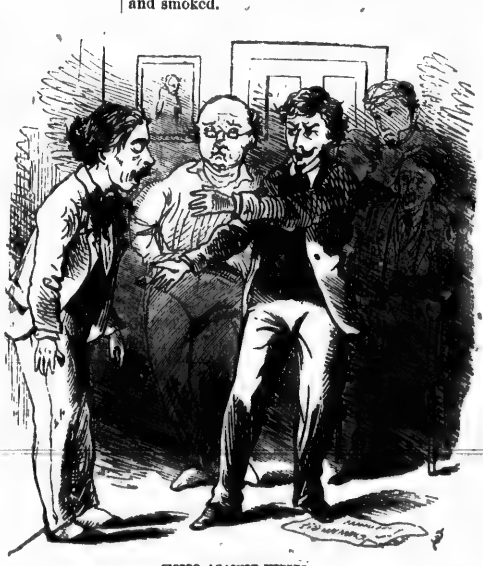
The Senator, Buttons, and Dick took the small valises which contained their travelling apparel, and dashed through the line of servitors into the house. The Doctor walked after, serenely and majestically. He had no baggage. Mr. Figgs descended from the roof with considerable difficulty. Slipping from the wheel, he fell into the outstretched arms of three waiters. They put him on his feet.

His luggage was soon ready.

Mr. Figgs had two trunks and various other articles. Of these trunks seven waiters took one, and four the other. Then

Waiter No. 12 took hat-box;
" " 13 " travelling desk;
" " 14 " Scotch plaid;
" " 15 " over-coat;
" " 16 " umbrella;
" " 17 " rubber coat;
Boy " 1 " cane;
" " 2 " muffler;
" " 3 " one of his mittens;
" " 4 " the other;
" " 5 " cigar-case.

After a long and laborious dinner they rose and smoked.



CICERO AGAINST VERRES.

SAC-R-R-R-RE!

The head waiter informed Mr. Figgs that with his permission a deputation would wait on him. Mr. Figgs was surprised, but graciously invited the deputation to walk in. They accordingly walked in. Seventeen men and five boys.

"What did they want?"

"Oh, only a *pourboire* with which to drink his Excellency's noble health."

"Really they did his Excellency too much honor. Were they not mistaken in their man?"

"Oh no. They had carried his luggage into the hotel."

Upon this Mr. Figgs gave strong proof of poor moral training, by breaking out into a volley of Western oaths, which shocked one half of the deputation, and made the other half grin.

Still they continued respectful but firm, and reiterated their demand.

Mr. Figgs called for the landlord. That gentleman was in bed. For his wife. She did not attend to the business. For the head waiter. The spokesman of the deputation, with a polite bow, informed him that the head waiter stood before him and was quite at his service.

The scene was ended by the sudden entrance of Buttons, who, motioning to Mr. Figgs, proceeded to give each waiter a douceur. One after another took the proffered coin, and without looking at it, thanked the generous donor with a profusion of bows.

Five minutes after the retreating form of Buttons had vanished through the door, twenty-one persons, consisting of men and boys, stood staring at one another in blank amazement.

Anger followed; then

"Sac-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-R-R-R-R-R-R-*R-Re!*"

He had given each one a *centime*.

But the customs of the hotel were not to be changed by the shabby conduct of one mean-minded person. When the Club prepared to retire for the night they were taken to some rooms opening into each other. Five waiters led the way; one waiter to each man, and each carried a pair of tall wax-candles. Mr. Figgs's waiter took him to his room, laid down the lights, and departed.

The doors which connected the rooms were all opened, and Mr. Figgs walked through to see about something. He saw the Doctor, the Senator, Buttons, and Dick, each draw the short, well-used stump of a wax-candle from his coat pocket and gravely light it. Then letting the melted wax fall on the mantle-pieces they stuck their candles there, and in a short time the rooms were brilliantly illuminated.

The waiters were thunderstruck. Such a procedure had never come within the compass of their experience of the ways of travellers.

"Bonsoir," said Buttons. "Don't let us detain you."

They went out stupefied.

"What's the idea now?" inquired Mr. Figgs.

"Oh, they charge a franc apiece for each candle, and that is a swindle which we will not submit to."

"And will I have to be humbugged again?"

"Certainly."

"Botheration."

"My dear Sir, the swindle of bougies is the curse of the Continental traveller. None of us are particularly prudent, but we are all on the watch against small swindles, and of them all this is the most frequent and most insidious, the most constantly and ever recurrent. Beware, my dear President, of bougies—that's what we call candles."

Mr. Figgs said nothing, but leaned against the wall for a moment in a meditative mood, as if debating what he should do next.

He happened to be in the Doctor's room. He had already noticed that this gentleman had no perceptible baggage, and didn't understand it. But now he saw it all.

The Doctor began gravely to make preparations for the night.

Before taking off his over-coat he drew various articles from the pockets, among which were:

A hair-brush,
A tooth-brush,
A shoe-brush,
A pot of blacking,
A night-shirt,
A clothes-brush,
A pipe,
A pouch of tobacco,
A razor,
A shaving-brush,
A piece of soap,
A night-cap,
A bottle of hair-oil,
A pistol,
A guide-book,
A cigar-case,
A bowie-knife,
A piece of cord,
A handkerchief,
A case of surgical instruments,
Some bits of candles.

Mr. Figgs rushed from the room.

NUMBER 729.

CHAPTER III.

THE RHONE IN A RAIN.—THE MAD FRENCHMAN.—SUICIDE A CAPITAL CRIME IN FRANCE.

The steamboats that run on the Rhone are very remarkable contrivances. Their builders have only aimed at combining a maximum of length with a minimum of other qualities, so that each boat displays an incredible extent of deck with no particular breadth at all. Five gentlemen took refuge in the cabin of the *Etoile*, from the drenching rain which fell during half of their voyage. This was an absurd vessel, that made trips between Lyons and Avignon. Her accommodations resembled those of a canal boat, and she was propelled by a couple of paddle-wheels driven by a Lilliputian engine. It was easy enough for her to go down the river, as the current took the responsibility of moving her along; but how she could ever get back it was difficult to tell.

They were borne onward through some of the fairest scenes on earth. Ruined towers, ivy-covered castles, thunder-blasted heights, fertile valleys, luxuriant orchards, terraced slopes, trellised vineyards, broad plains, bounded by distant mountains, whose summits were lost in the clouds; such were the successive charms of the region through which they were passing. Yet though they were most eloquently described in the letters which Buttons wrote home to his friends, it must be confessed that they made but little impression at the time, and indeed were scarcely seen at all through the vapor-covered cabin windows.

Avignon did not excite their enthusiasm. In vain the guide-book told them about Petrarch and Laura. The usual raptures were not forthcoming. In vain the cicerone led them through the old papal palace. Its sombre walls awakened no emotion. The only effect produced was on the Senator, who whiled away the hours of early bed-time by pointing out the superiority of American institutions to those which reared the prisons which they had visited.

Arles was much more satisfactory. There are more pretty women in Arles than in any other town of the same size on the Continent. The Club created an unusual excitement in this peaceful town by walking slowly through it in Indian file, narrowly scrutinizing every thing. They wondered much at the numbers of people that filled the cathedral, all gayly dressed. It was not until after a long calculation that they found out that it was Sunday. Buttons kept his memorandum-book in his hand all day, and took account of all the pretty women whom he saw. The number rose as high as 729. He would have raised it higher, but unfortunately an indignant citizen put a stop to it by charging him with impertinence to his wife.

On the railroad to Marseilles is a famous tunnel. At the last station before entering the tunnel a gentleman got in. As they passed through the long and gloomy place there suddenly arose a most outrageous noise in the car.

It was the new passenger.

Occasionally the light shining in would disclose him, dancing, stamping, tearing his hair, rolling his eyes, gnashing his teeth, and cursing.

"Is he crazy?" said Dick.

"Or drunk?" said Buttons.

Lo and behold! just as the train emerged from the tunnel the passenger made a frantic dash at the window, flung it open, and before any body could speak or move he was half out.

To spring over half a dozen seats, to land behind him, to seize his outstretched leg, to jerk him in again, was but the work of a moment. It was Buttons who did this, and who banged down the window again.

"Sac-r-r-r-r-r-Ré!" cried the Frenchman.

"Is it that you are mad?" said Buttons.

"Sacré Bleu!" cried the other. "Who are you that lays hands on me?"

"I saved you from destruction."

"Then, Sir, you have no thanks. Behold me, I'm a desperate man!"

In truth he looked like one. His clothes were all disordered. His lips were bleeding, and most of his hair was torn out. By this time the guard had come to the spot. All those in the car had gathered round. It was a long car, second-class, like the American.

"M'sieu, how is this? What is it that I see? You endeavor to kill yourself?"

"Leave me. I am desperate."

"But no, M'sieu, what is it?"

"Listen. I enter the train thinking to go to Avignon. I have important business there, most important. Suddenly I am struck by a thought. I find I have mistaken. I am carried to Marseilles. It is the express train, and I must go all the way. Horror! Despair! Life is of no use! It is time to resign it! I die! Accordingly I attempt to leap from the window, when this gentleman seizes me by the leg and pulls me in. Behold all."

"M'sieu," said the guard, slowly, and with emphasis, "you have committed a grave offense. Suicide is a capital crime."

"A capital crime!" exclaimed the Frenchman, turning pale. "Great Heaven!"

"Yes, Sir. If you leap from the car I shall put you in irons, and hand you over to the police when we stop."

The Frenchman's pale face grew paler. He became humble. He entreated the guard's compassion. He begged Buttons to intercede. He had a family. Moreover he had fought in the wars of his country. He had warred in Africa. He appealed to the Senator, the Doctor, to Figgs, to Dick. Finally he became calm, and the train shortly after arrived at Marseilles.

The last that was seen of him he was rushing frantically about looking for the return train.

HORROR! DESPAIR!

CHAPTER IV.

MARSEILLES.

Old Massilia wears her years well. To look at her now as she appears, full of life and joy and gayety, no one would imagine that thirty centuries or more had passed over her head.

Here is the first glimpse of the glorious South, with all its sunshine and luxury and voluptuous beauty. Here the Mediterranean rolls its waters of deepest blue, through the clear air the landscape appears with astonishing distinctness, and the sharply-defined lines of distinct objects surprise the Northern eye. Marseilles is always a picturesque city. No commercial town in the world can compare with it in this respect. On the water float the Mediterranean craft, rakish boats, with enormous latteen sails; long, low, sharp, black vessels, with a suspicious air redolent of smuggling and piracy. No tides rise and fall — advance and retreat. The waters are always the same.

All the Mediterranean nations are represented in Marseilles. Three-quarters of the world send their people here. Europe, Asia, Africa. In the streets the Syrian jostles the Spaniard; the Italian the Arab; the Moor jokes with the Jew; the Greek chaffers with the Algerine; the Turk scowls at the Corsican; the Russian from Odessa pokes the Maltese in the ribs. There is no want of variety here. Human nature is seen under a thousand aspects. Marseilles is the most cosmopolitan of cities, and represents not only many races but many ages.

Moreover it is a fast city. New York is not more ambitious; Chicago not more aspiring; San Francisco not more confident in its future. Amazing sight! Here is a city which, at the end of three thousand years, looks forward to a longer and grander life in the future.

And why?

Why, because she expects yet to be the arbiter of Eastern commerce. Through her the gold, the spices, and the gems of India will yet be conveyed over the European world. For the Suez Canal, which will once more turn the tide of this mighty traffic through its ancient Mediterranean channel, will raise Marseilles to the foremost rank among cities.

So, at least, the Marseillaise believe.

When our travellers arrived there the city was crammed with soldiers. The harbor was packed with steamships. Guns were thundering, bands playing, fifes screaming, muskets rattling, regiments tramping, cavalry galloping. Confusion reigned supreme. Every thing was out of order. No one spoke or thought of any thing but the coming war in Lombardy.

Excitable little red-legged French soldiers danced about everywhere. Every one was beside himself. None could use the plain language of every-day life. All were intoxicated with hope and enthusiasm.

The travellers admired immensely the exciting scene, but their admiration was changed to disgust when they found that on account of the rush of soldiers to Italy their own prospects of getting there were extremely slight.

At length they found that a steamer was going. It was a propeller. Its name was the *Prince*. The enterprising company that owned her had patriotically chartered every boat on their line to the Government at an enormous profit, and had placed the *Prince* on the line for the use of travellers.

THOSE ITALIANS.

CHAPTER V.

THE RETIRED ORGAN-GRINDER.—THE SENATOR PHILOSOPHIZES.—EVILS OF NOT HAVING A PASSPORT.

THE Mediterranean is the most glorious of seas. The dark-blue waves; the skies of darker blue; the distant hills of purple, with their crowns of everlasting snow; and the beetling precipice, where the vexed waters forever throw up their foaming spray; the frequent hamlets that nestle among them; the castles and towers that crown the lofty heights; and the road that winds tortuously along the shore—all these form a scene in which beauty more romantic than that of the Rhine is contrasted with all the grandeur of the ocean.

Buttons, with his usual flexible and easy disposition, made the acquaintance of a couple of Italians who had been away from Italy and were now returning. They were travelling second-class.

Buttons supposed they were glad to get back.

"Glad? Did he doubt it? Why, they were Italians."

"Are Italians fonder of their country than others?"

"Without doubt. Had they not the best reason to be?"

"Why?"

"They had the garden and pride of the world for their country. Mention any other in the same breath with Italy."

"If they love it so much why can they not keep it for themselves?"

"How can you ask that? If you know the history of the country you will see that it has been impossible. No other was ever so beset. It is split up into different States, it is surrounded by powerful enemies who take advantage of this. It would not be so bad if there were only one foreign foe; but there are many, and if one were driven out another would step in."

"There will be a chance for them now to show what they can do."

"True; and you will see what they will do. They only want the French to open the way. We Italians can do the rest ourselves. It is a good time to go to Italy. You will see devotion and patriotism such as you never saw before. There is no country so beloved as Italy."

"I think other nations are as patriotic."

"Other nations! What nations? Do you know that the Italians can not leave Italy? It is this love that keeps them home. French, Germans, Spaniards, Portuguese, English—all others leave their homes, and go all over the world to live. Italians can not and do not."

"I have seen Italians in America."

"You have seen Italian exiles, not emigrants. Or you have seen them staying there for a few years so as to earn a little money to go back with. They are only travellers on business. They are always unhappy, and are always cheered by the prospect of getting home at last."

These Italians were brothers, and from experience in the world had grown very intelligent. One had been in the hand-organ busi-

ness, the other in the image-making line. Italians can do nothing else in the bustling communities of foreign nations. Buttons looked with respect upon those men who thus had carried their love for their dear Art for years through strange lands and uncongenial climes.

"If I were an Italian I too would be an organ-grinder!" he at length exclaimed.

The Italians did not reply, but evidently thought that Buttons could not be in a better business.

"These *I*talians," said the Senator, to whom Buttons had told the conversation—"these *I*talians," said he, after they had gone, "air a singular people. They're deficient. They're wanting in the leading element of the age. They haven't got any idee of the principle of pro-gress. They don't understand trade. There's where they miss it. What's the use of hand-organs? What's the use of dancers? What's the use of statoos, whether plaster images or marble sculptoor? Can they clear forests or build up States? No, Sir; and therefore I say that this *I*talian nation will never be wuth a cuss until they are inoculated with the spirit of Seventy-six, the principles of the Pilgrim Fathers, and the doctrines of the Revolution. Boney knows it"—he added, sententiously—"bless you, Boney knows it."

After a sound sleep, which lasted until late in the following day, they went out on deck.

There lay Genoa.

Glorious sight! As they stood looking at the superb city the sun poured down upon the scene his brightest rays. The city rose in successive terraces on the side of a semicircular slope crowned with massive edifices; moles projected into the harbor terminated by lofty towers; the inner basin was crowded with shipping, prominent among which were countless French ships of war and transports. The yells of fifes, the throbbing of drums, the bang of muskets, the thunder of cannon, and the strains of martial music filled the air. Boats crowded with soldiers constantly passed from the ships to the stone quays, where thousands more waited to receive them—soldiers being mixed up with guns, cannons, wheels, muskets, drums, baggage, sails, beams, timbers, camps, mattresses, casks, boxes, irons, in infinite confusion.

"We must go ashore here," said Buttons. "Does any body know how long the steamer will remain here?"

"A day."

"A day! That will be magnificent! We will be able to see the whole city in that time. Let's go and order a boat off."

The Captain received them politely.

"What did Messieurs want? To go ashore? With the utmost pleasure. Had they their passports? Of course they had them *viséd* in Marseilles for Genoa."

Buttons looked blank, and feebly inquired:

"Why?"

"It's the law, Monsieur. We are prohibited from permitting passengers to go ashore unless their passports are all right. It's a mere form."

"A mere form!" cried Buttons. "Why, ours are *viséd* for Naples."

"Naples!" cried the Captain, with a shrug; "you are unfortunate, Messieurs. That will not pass you to Genoa."

"My dear Sir, you don't mean to tell me that, on account of this little informality, you will keep us prisoners on board of this vessel? Consider—"

"Monsieur," said the Captain, courteously, "I did not make these laws. It is the law; I can not change it. I should be most happy to oblige you, but I ask you, how is it possible?"

The Captain was right. He could do nothing. The travellers would have to swallow their rage.

Imagine them looking all day at the loveliest of Italian scenes—the glorious city of Genoa, with all its historic associations!—the city of the Dorias, the home of Columbus, even now

GENOA, THE SUPERB.

the scene of events upon which the eyes of all the world were fastened.

Imagine them looking upon all this, and only looking, unable to go near; seeing all the preparations for war, but unable to mingle with the warriors. To pace up and down all day; to shake their fists at the scene; to fret, and fume, and chafe with irrepressible impatience; to scold, to rave, to swear—this was the lot of the unhappy tourists.

High in the startled heavens rose the thunder of preparations for the war in Lombardy. They heard the sounds, but could not watch the scene near at hand.

The day was as long as an ordinary week, but at length it came to an end. On the following morning steam was got up, and they went to Leghorn.

"I suppose they will play the same game on us at Leghorn," said Dick, mournfully.

"Without doubt," said Buttons. "But I don't mind; the bitterness of death is past. I can stand any thing now."

Again the same tantalizing view of a great city from afar. Leghorn lay inviting them, but the unlucky passport kept them on board of the vessel. The Senator grew impatient, Mr. Figgs and the Doctor were testy; Dick and Buttons alone were calm. It was the calmness of despair.

After watching Leghorn for hours they were taken to Civita Vecchia. Here they rushed down below, and during the short period of their stay remained invisible.

At last their voyage ended, and they entered the harbor of Naples. Glorious Naples! Naples the captivating!

"*Vede Napoli, e poi mori!*"

There was the Bay of Naples—the matchless, the peerless, the indescribable! There the rock of Ischia, the Isle of Capri, there the slopes of Sorrento, where never-ending spring abides; there the long sweep of Naples and her sister cities; there Vesuvius, with its thin volume of smoke floating like a pennon in the air!

THEIR NOBLE EXCELLENCIES.

CHAPTER VI.

LAZARONI AND MACARONI.

About forty or fifty lazaroni surrounded the Dodge Club when they landed, but to their intense disgust the latter ignored them altogether, and carried their own umbrellas and carpet-bags. But the lazaroni revenged themselves. As the Doctor stooped to pick up his cane, which had fallen, a number of articles dropped from his breast-pocket, and among them was a revolver, a thing which was tabooed in Naples. A ragged rascal eagerly snatched it and handed it to a gendarme, and it was only after paying a piastre that the Doctor was permitted to retain it.

Even after the travellers had started off on foot in search of lodgings the lazaroni did not desert them. Ten of them followed everywhere. At intervals they respectfully offered to carry their baggage, or show them to a hotel, whichever was most agreeable to their Noble Excellencies.

Their Noble Excellencies were in despair. At length, stumbling upon the Café dell' Europa, they rushed in and passed three hours

over their breakfast. This done, they congratulated themselves on having got rid of their followers.

In vain!

Scarcely had they emerged from the café than Dick uttered a cry of horror. From behind a corner advanced their ten friends, with the same calm demeanor, the same unruffled and even cheerful patience, and the same respectful offer of their humble services.

In despair they separated. Buttons and Dick obtained lodgings in the Strada di San Bartollomeo. The Senator and the other two engaged pleasant rooms on the Strada Nuova, which overlooked the Bay.

Certainly Naples is a very curious place. There are magnificent edifices—palaces, monuments, castles, fortresses, churches, and cathedrals. There are majestic rows of buildings; gay shops, splendidly decorated; stately colonnades, and gardens like Paradise. There are streets unrivalled for gayety, forever filled to overflowing with the busy, the laughing, the jolly; dashing officers, noisy soldiers, ragged lazaroni, proud nobles, sickly beggars, lovely ladies; troops of cavalry galloping up and down; ten thousand calèches dashing to and fro. There is variety enough everywhere.

All the trades are divided, and arranged in different parts of the city. Here are the locksmiths, there the cabinet-makers; here the builders, there the armorers; in this place the basket-weavers, in that the cork-makers.

And most amusing of all is the street most favored of the lazaroni. Here they live, and move, and have their being; here they are born, they grow, they wed, they rear families, they eat, and drink, and die. A long array of furnaces extends up the street; over each is a stew-pan, and behind each a cook armed with an enormous ladle. At all hours of the day the cook serves up macaroni to customers. This is the diet of the people.

In the cellars behind those lines of stew-pans are the eating-houses of the vulgar—low, grimy places, floors incrusted with mud, tables of thick deal worn by a thousand horny hands, slippery with ten thousand upset dishes of macaroni. Here the pewter plates, and the iron knives, forks, and spoons are chained to the massive tables. How utter must the destitution be when it is thought necessary to chain up such worthless trash!

Into one of these places went Buttons and Dick in their study of human nature. They sat at the table. A huge dish of macaroni was served up. Fifty guests stopped to look at the new-comers. The waiters winked at the customers of the house, and thrust their tongues in their cheeks.

Dick could not eat, but the more philosophical Buttons made an extremely hearty meal, and pronounced the macaroni delicious.

On landing in a city which swarmed with beggars the first thought of our tourists was, How the mischief do they all live? There are sixty thousand lazaroni in this gay city. The average amount of clothing to each man is about one-third of a pair of trowsers and a woolen cap. But after spending a day or two the question changed its form, and became, How the mischief can they all help living? Food may be picked up in the streets. Handfuls of oranges and other fruits sell for next to nothing; strings of figs cost about a cent.

The consequence is that these sixty thousand people, fellow-creatures of ours, who are known as the lazaroni of Naples, whom we half pity and altogether despise, and look upon as the lowest members of the Caucasian race, are not altogether very miserable. On the contrary, taken as a whole, they form the raggedest, oiliest, fattest, drollest, noisiest, sleekest, dirtiest, ignorantest, prejudicedest, narrow-mindedest, shirtlessest, clotheslessest, idlest, carelessest, jolliest, absurdest, rascaliest—but still, for all that, perhaps—taken all in all—the happiest community on the face of the earth.

LAZZERONI AND MACARONI.

YANKEE DOODLE.

CHAPTER VII.

DOLORES.—AN ITALIAN MAID LEARNS ENGLISH.—A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE.—A MASQUERADE, AND WHAT BEFELL THE SENATOR.—A CHARMING DOMINO.—A MOONLIGHT WALK, AND AN ASTOUNDING DISCOVERY.

THE lodgings of Buttons and Dick were in a remarkably central part of Naples. The landlord was a true Neapolitan; a handsome, gay, witty, noisy, lively, rascally, covetous, ungrateful, deceitful, cunning, good-hearted old scoundrel, who took advantage of his guests in a thousand ways, and never spoke to them without trying to humbug them. He was the father of a pretty daughter who had all her parent's nature somewhat toned down, and expanded in a feminine mould.

Buttons had a chivalrous soul, and so had Dick; the vivacity of this very friendly young lady was like an oasis in the wilderness of travel. In the evening they loved to sit in the sunshine of her smile. She was singularly unconventional, this landlord's daughter, and made many informal calls on her two lodgers in their apartment.

An innocent, sprightly little maid—name Dolores—age seventeen—complexion olive—hair jet black—eyes likes tars, large, luminous, and at the same time twinkling—was anxious to learn English, especially to sing English songs; and so used to bring her guitar and sing for the Americans. Would they teach her their national song? "Oh yes! happy beyond expression to do so."

The result, after ten lessons, was something like this:

"Anty Doodu tummu towna
By his sef a po-ne
Stucca fadda luna eat
Kalla Maccaroni."

She used to sing this in the most charming manner, especially the last word in the last line. Not the least charm in her manner was her evident conviction that she had mastered the English language.

"Was it not an astonishing thing for so young a Signorina to know English?"

"Oh, it was indeed!" said Buttons, who knew Italian very well, and had the lion's share of the conversation always.

"And they said her accent was fine?"

"Oh, most beautiful!"

"Bellissima! Bellissima!" repeated little Dolores, and she would laugh until her eyes overflowed with delighted vanity.

"Could any Signorina Americana learn Italian in so short a time?"

"No, not one. They had not the spirit. They could never equal her most beautiful accent."

"Ah! you say all the time that my accent is most beautiful."

One day she picked up a likeness of a young lady which was lying on the table.

"Who is this?" she asked, abruptly, of Buttons.

"A Signorina."

"Oh yes! I know; but is she a relative?"

"No."

"Are you married?"

"No."

"Is this your affianced?"

"Yes."

"Ah, how strange! What will you be?—a soldier or an advocate?"

"Neither. I will be a priest."

"A priest! Signor, what is it that you tell me? How can this be your affianced lady?"

"Oh! in our country the priests all marry, and live in beautiful little cottages, with a garden in front."

This Dolores treated with the most contemptuous incredulity. Who ever heard of such a thing? Impossible! Moreover, it was so absurd. Buttons told her that he was affianced five years ago.

"An eternity!" exclaimed Dolores. "How can you wait? But you must have been very young."

"Young? Yes, only sixteen."

"Blessed and most venerable Virgin! Only sixteen! And is she the most beautiful girl you know?"

"No."

"Where have you seen one more so?"

"In Naples."

"Who is she?"

"An Italian."

"What is her name?"

"Dolores."

"That's me."

"I mean you."

This was pretty direct; but Dolores was frank, and required frankness from others. Some young ladies would have considered this too coarse and open to be acceptable. But Dolores had so high an opinion of herself that she took it for sincere homage. So she half closed her eyes, leaned back in her chair, looked languishingly at Buttons, and then burst into a merry peal of musical laughter.

"I think I am the most beautiful girl you ever saw."

It was Buttons's turn to laugh. He told Dolores that she was quite right, and repeated her favorite word, "Bellissima!"

One evening when Dick was alone in the room a knock came to the door.

"Was he disengaged?"

"Oh, quite."

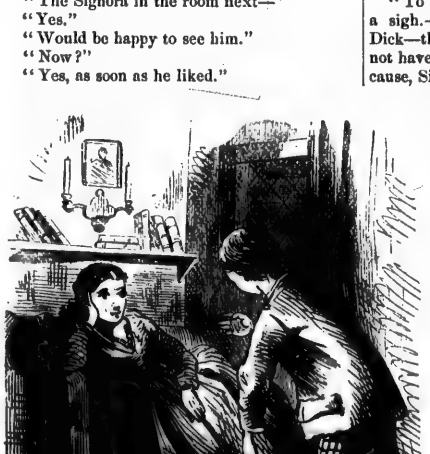
"The Signora in the room next—"

"Yes."

"Would be happy to see him."

"Now?"

"Yes, as soon as he liked."



A KISS HANDS.

The Signora did not have to wait long. In less time than it takes to tell this Dick stood with his best bow before her. How he congratulated himself on having studied Italian! The lady reclined on a sofa. She was about thirty, and undeniably pretty. A guitar lay at her feet. Books were scattered around—French novels, and manuals of devotion. Intelligence beamed from her large, expressive eyes. How delightful! Here was an adventure, perhaps a fair conquest.

"Good-evening, Signor!"

"I kiss the hands to your ladyship," said Dick, mustering a sentence from Ollendorff.

"Pardon me for this liberty."

"I assure you it gives me the greatest happiness, and I am wholly at your service."

"I have understood that you are an American."

"I am, Signora."

"And this is your first visit to Naples?"

"My first, Signora."

"How does Naples please you?"

"Exceedingly. The beautiful city, the crowded streets, the delightful views—above all, the most charming ladies."

A bow—a slight flush passed over the lady's face, and Dick whispered to himself—

"Well put, Dick, my boy—deuced well put for a beginner."

"To come to the point," said the lady, with a sigh.—("Ah, here we have it!" thought Dick—the point—blessed moment!)—"I would not have ventured to trouble you for any slight cause, Signor, but this nearly concerns myself."—(Keep down—our heart, murmured Dick—cool, you dog—cool!)—"My happiness and my tenderest feelings—" (Dick's suffused eyes expressed deep sympathy.)—"I thought of you—"

"Ah, Signora!"

"And not being acquainted with you—" (What a shame!—*aside*)—"I concluded to waive all formality"—(Social forms are generally a nuisance to ardent souls—*aside*)—"and to communicate at once with you."

"Signora, let me assure you that this is the happiest moment in my life."

The Signora looked surprised, but went on in a sort of preoccupied way: "I want to know if you can tell me any thing about my brother."

"Brother!"

"Who is now in America."

Dick opened his eyes.

"I thought that perhaps you could tell me how he is. I have not heard from him for two years, and feel very anxious."

Dick sat for a moment surprised at this unexpected turn. The lady's anxiety about her brother he could see was not feigned. So he concealed

THE YOUNG HUSSAR.

his disappointment, and in his most engaging manner informed her that he had not seen her brother; but if she could tell him his name, and the place where he was living, he might be able to tell something about him.

"His name," sighed the lady, "is Giulio Fanti."

"And the place?"

"Rio Janeiro."

"Rio Janeiro?"

"Yes," said the lady, slowly.

Dick was in despair. Not to know any thing of her brother would make her think him stupid. So he attempted to explain:

"America," he began, "is a very large country—larger, in fact, than the whole Kingdom of Naples. It is principally inhabited by savages, who are very hostile to the whites. The whites have a few cities, however. In the North, the whites all speak English. In the South they all speak Spanish. The South Americans are good Catholics, and respect the Holy Father; but the English in the North are all heretics. Consequently there is scarcely any communication between the two districts."

The lady had heard somewhere that in the American wars they employed the savages to assist them. Dick acknowledged the truth of this with candor, but with pain. She would see by this why he was unable to tell her any thing about her brother. His not knowing that brother was now the chief sorrow of his life. The lady earnestly hoped that Rio Janeiro was well protected from the savages.

"Oh, perfectly so. The fortifications of that city are impregnable."

Dick thus endeavored to give the lady an idea of America. The conversation gradually tapered down until the entrance of a gentleman brought it to a close. Dick bowed himself out.

"At any rate," he murmured, "if the lady wanted to inspect me she had a chance, and if she wanted to pump me she ought to be satisfied."

One evening Buttons and Dick came in and found a stranger chatting familiarly with the landlord and a young hussar. The stranger was dressed like a cavalry officer, and was the most astounding fop that the two Americans had ever seen. He paced up and down, head erect, chest thrown out, sabre clanking, spurs jingling, eyes sparkling, ineffable smile. He strode up to the two youths, spun round on one heel, bowed to the ground, waved his hand patronizingly, and welcomed them in.

"A charming night, gallant gentlemen. A bewitching night. All Naples is alive. All the world is going. Are you?"

The young men stared, and coldly asked where?

"Ha, ha, ha!" A merry peal of laughter rang out. "Absolutely — if the young Americans are not stupid. They don't know me!"

"Dolores!" exclaimed Buttons.

"Yes," exclaimed the other. "How do you like me? Am I natural?—eh? military? Do I look terrible?"

And Dolores skipped up and down with a strut beyond description, breathing hard and frowning.

"If you look so fierce you will frighten us away," said Buttons.

"How do I look now?" she said, standing full before him with folded arms, *à la* Napoleon at St. Helena.

"Bellissima! Bellissima!" said Buttons, in unfeigned admiration.

"Ah!" ejaculated Dolores, smacking her lips, and puffing out her little dimpled cheeks. "Oh!" and her eyes sparkled more brightly with perfect joy and self-contentment.

"And what is all this for?"

"Is it possible that you do not know?"

"I have no idea."

"Then listen. It is at the Royal Opera-house. It will be the greatest masquerade ball ever given."

"Oh—a masquerade ball!—and you?"

"I? I go as a handsome young officer to break the hearts of the ladies, and have such rare sport. My brave cousin, yonder gallant soldier, goes with me."

The brave cousin, who was a big, heavy-head-

ed fellow, grinned in acknowledgment, but said nothing.

The Royal Opera-house at Naples is the largest, the grandest, and the most capacious in the world. An immense stage, an enormous pit all thrown into one vast room, surrounded by innumerable boxes, all rising, tier above tier—myriads of dancers, myriads of masks, myriads of spectators—so the scene appeared. Moreover, the Neapolitan is a born buffoon. Nowhere is he so natural as at a masquerade. The music, the crowd, the brilliant lights, the incessant motion are all intoxication to this impressible being.

The Senator lent the countenance of his presence—not from curiosity, but from a benevolent desire to keep his young friends out of trouble. He narrowly escaped being prohibited from entering by making an outrageous fuss at the door about some paltry change. He actually imagined that it was possible to get the right change for a large coin in Naples.

The multitudes of moving forms made the new-comers dizzy. There were all kinds of fantastic figures. Lions polked with sylphs, crocodiles chased serpents, giants walked arm in arm with dwarfs, elephants on two legs ran nimbly about, beating every body with huge probosces of inflated India rubber. Pretty girls in dominos abounded; every body whose face was visible was on the broad grin. All classes were represented. The wealthiest nobles entered into the spirit of the scene with as great gusto as the humblest artisan who treated his obscure sweet-heart with an entrance ticket.

Our friends all wore black dominos, "just for the fun of the thing." Every body knew that they were English or American, which is just the same; for Englishmen and Americans are universally recognizable by the rigidity of their muscles.

A bevy of masked beauties were attracted by the colossal form of the Senator. To say that he was bewildered would express his sensations but faintly. He was distracted. He looked for Buttons. Buttons was chatting with a little domino. He turned to Dick. Dick was walking off with a rhinoceros. To Figgs and the Doctor. Figgs and the Doctor were exchanging glances with a couple of lady codfishes and trying to look amiable. The Senator gave a sickly smile.

"What'n thunder'll I do?" he muttered.

Two dominos took either arm. A third stood smilingly before him. A fourth tried to appropriate his left hand.

"Will your Excellency dance with one of us at a time," said No. 4, with a Tuscan accent, "or will you dance with all of us at once?"

The Senator looked helplessly at her.

"He does not know how," said No 1. "He has passed his life among the stars."

"Begone, irreverent ones!" said No. 3. "This is an American prince. He said I should be his partner."

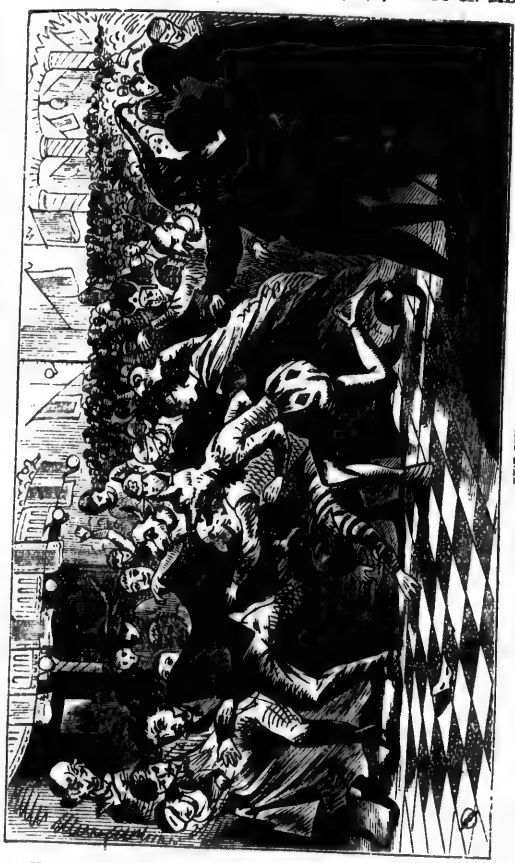
"Boh! malidetta!" cried No. 2. "He told me the same; but he said he was a Milor Inglese."

No. 4 thereupon gave a smart pull at the Senator's hand to draw him off. Whereupon No. 2 did the same. No. 3 began singing "Come e bello!" and No. 1 stood coaxing him to "Fly with her." A crowd of idlers gathered grinningly around.

"My goodness!" groaned the Senator. "Me! the—the representative of a respectable constituency; the elder of a Presbyterian church; the president of a temperance society; the deliverer of that famous Fourth of July oration; the father of a family—me! to be treated thus! Who air these females? Air they countesses? Is this the way the foreign nobility treat an American citizen?"

But the ladies pulled and the crowd grinned. The Senator endeavored to remonstrate. Then he tried to pull his arms away; but finding that impossible he looked in a piteous manner, first at one, and then at the other.

A PERPLEXED SENATOR.



EXIT SENATOR.

"He wants, I tell you, to be my partner," said No. 1.

"Bah!" cried No. 2, derisively; "he intends to be mine. I understand the national dance of his country—the famous jeeg Irlandese."

"MRS.!!!"

The Senator shouted this one word in a stentorian voice. The ladies dropped his arms and started.

"I say, Mrs.!" cried the Senator. "Look here. Me no speeky *I*-talian—me American. Me come just see zee fun, you know—zee spoart—you und-stand? Ha? Hum!"

The ladies clapped their hands, and cried "Bravo!"

Quite a crowd gathered around them. The Senator, impressed with the idea that, to make foreigners understand, it was only necessary to yell loud enough, bawled so loudly that ever so many dancers stopped. Among these Buttons came near with the little Domino. Little Domino stopped, laughed, clapped her hands, and pointed to the Senator.

The Senator was yelling vehemently in broken English to a large crowd of masks. He told them that he had a large family; that he owned a factory; that he was a man of weight, character, influence, popularity, wealth; that he came here merely to study their manners and customs. He disclaimed any intention to participate in their amusements just then, or to make acquaintances.—He would be proud to visit them all at their houses, or see them at his apartments, or—or—in short, would be happy to do any thing if they would only let him go in peace.

The crowd laughed, chattered, and shouted "Bravo!" at every pause. The Senator was covered with shame and perspiration. What would have become of him finally it is impossible to guess; but, fortunately, at this extremity he caught sight of Buttons. To dash away from the charming ladies, to burst through the crowd, and to seize the arm of Buttons was but the work of a moment.

"Buttons! Buttons! Help me! These confounded *I*-talian wimmin! Take them away. Tell them to leave me be. Tell them I don't know them—don't want to have them hanging round me. Tell them *I'm your father!*" cried the Senator, his voice rising to a shout in his distraction and alarm.

About 970 people were around him by this time.

"Goodness!" said Buttons; "you are in a fix. Why did you make yourself so agreeable? and to so many? Why, it's too bad. One at a time!"

"Buttons," said the Senator, solemnly, "is this a time for joking? For Heaven's sake get me away!"

"Come, then; you must run for it."

He seized the Senator's right arm. The little Domino clung to his other. Away they

started. It was a full run. A shout arose. So arises the shout in Rome along the bellowing Corso when the horses are starting for the Carnival races. It was a long, loud shout, gathering and growing and deepening as it rose, till it burst on high in one grand thunder-clap of sound.

Away went the Senator like the wind. The dense crowd parted on either side with a rush. The Opera-house is several hundred feet in length. Down this entire distance the Senator ran, accompanied by Buttons and the little Domino. Crowds cheered him as he passed. Behind him the passage-way closed up, and a long trail of screaming maskers pressed after him. The louder they shouted the faster the Senator ran. At length they reached the other end.

"Do you see that box?" asked Buttons, pointing to one on the topmost tier.

"Yes, yes."

"Fly! Run for your life! It's your only hope. Get in there and hide till we go!"

The Senator vanished. Scarcely had his coat-tails disappeared through the door when the pursuing crowd arrived there. Six thousand two hundred and twenty-seven human beings, dressed in every variety of costume, on finding that the runner had vanished, gave vent to their excited feelings by a loud cheer for the interesting American who had contributed so greatly to the evening's enjoyment.

Unlucky Senator! Will it be believed that even in the topmost box his pursuers followed him? It was even so. About an hour afterward Buttons, on coming near the entrance, encountered him. His face was pale but resolute, his dress disordered. He muttered a few words about "durned *I*-talian countesses," and hurried out.

Buttons kept company with the little Domino. Never in his life had he passed so agreeable an evening. He took good care to let his companion know this. At length the crowd began to separate. The Domino would go. Buttons would go with her. Had she a carriage? No, she walked. Then he would walk with her.

Buttons tried hard to get a carriage, but all were engaged. But a walk would not be unpleasant in such company. The Domino did not complain. She was vivacious, brilliant, delightful, bewitching. Buttons had been trying all the evening to find out who she was. In vain.

"Who in the world is she? I must find out, so that I may see her again." This was his one thought.

They approached the Strada Nuova.

"She is not one of the nobility, at any rate," he thought, "or she would not live here."

They turned up a familiar street.

"How exceedingly jolly! She can't live far away from my lodgings."

They entered the Strada di San Bartolomeo.

"Hanged if she don't live in the same street!"

A strange thought occurred. It was soon confirmed. They stopped in front of Buttons's own lodgings. A light gleamed over the door. Another flashed into the soul of Buttons. The Domino took off her mask and turned her face up to Buttons. That face, dimpled, smiling, bewitching; flashing, sparkling eyes; little mouth with its rosy lips!

"*Dolores!*"

"Blessed saints, and Holy Virgin! Is it possible that you never suspected?"

"Never. How could I when I thought you were dressed like a dragoon?"

"And you never passed so happy an evening; and you never had so fascinating and charming a partner; and you never heard such a voice of music as mine; and you can never forget me through all life; and you never can hope to find any one equal to me!" said Dolores, in her usual laughing volubility.

"Never!" cried Buttons.

"Oh dear! I think you must love me very much."

And a merry peal of laughter rang up the stairs as Dolores, evading Buttons's arm, which that young man had tried to pass about her waist, dashed away into the darkness and out of sight.

CHAPTER VIII.

ADVENTURES AND MISADVENTURES.—A WET GROTTO AND A BOILING LAKE.—THE TWO FAIR SPANIARDS, AND THE DONKEY RIDE.

THE Grotto of Posilippo is a most remarkable place, and, in the opinion of every intelligent traveller, is more astonishing than even the Hoosac Tunnel, which nobody will deny except the benighted Bostonian.

The city of Pozzuoli is celebrated for two things; first, because St. Paul once landed there, and no doubt hurried away as fast as he could; and, secondly, on account of the immense number of beggars that throng around the unhappy one who enters its streets.

The Dodge Club contributed liberally. The Doctor gave a cork-screw; the Senator, a bladeless knife; Dick, an old lottery ticket; Buttons, a candle-stump; Mr. Figgs, a wild-cat banknote. After which they all hurried away on donkeys as fast as possible.

The donkey is in his glory here. Nowhere else does he develop such a variety of forms—nowhere attain such an infinity of sizes—nowhere emit so impressive a bray. It is the Bray of Naples. "It is like the thunder of the night when the cloud bursts o'er Cona, and a thousand ghosts shriek at once in the hollow wind."

There is a locality in this region which the ancients named after a certain warm region which no refined person ever permits himself to mention in our day. Whatever it may have been when some Roman Tityrus walked pipe in mouth along its shore, its present condition renders its name singularly appropriate and felicitous. Here the party amused themselves

with a lunch of figs and oranges, which they gathered indiscriminately from orchards and gardens on the road-side.

There was the Lake Lucrine. Averno and the Elysian Fields were there. The ruins of Caligula's Bridge dotted the surface of the sea. Yet the charms of all these classic scenes were eclipsed in the tourists' eyes by those of a number of pretty peasants girls who stood washing clothes in the limpid waters of the lake.

It was in this neighborhood that they found the Grotto of the Cumæan Sibyl. They followed the intelligent cicerone, armed with torches, into a gloomy tunnel. The intelligent cicerone walked before them with the air of one who had something to show. Seven stout peasants followed after. The cavern was as dark as possible, and extended apparently for an endless distance.

After walking a distance of about two miles, according to the Senator's calculation, they came to the centre of interest. It was a hole in the wall of the tunnel. The Americans were given to understand that they must enter here.

"But how?"

"How? Why, on the broad backs of the stout peasants, who all stood politely offering their humble services." The guide went first. Buttons, without more ado, got on the back of the nearest Italian and followed. Dick came next; then the Doctor. Mr. Figgs and the Senator followed in the same dignified manner.

They descended for some distance, and finally came to water about three feet deep. As the roof was low, and only rose three feet above the water, the party had some difficulty, not only in keeping their feet out of the water, but also in breathing. At length they came to a chamber about twelve feet square. From this they passed on to another of the same size. Thence to another. And so on.

Arriving at the last, Bearer No. 1 quietly deposited Buttons on a raised stone platform, which fortunately arose about half an inch above the water. Three other bearers did the same. Mr. Figgs looked forlornly about him, and, being a fat man, seemed to grow somewhat apoplectic. Dick beguiled the time by lighting his pipe.

"So this is the Grotto of the Cumæan Sibyl, is it?" said Buttons. "Then all I can say is that—"

What he was going to say was lost by a loud cry which interrupted him and startled all. It came from the other chamber.

"The Senator!" said Dick.

It was indeed his well-known voice. There was a plash and a groan. Immediately afterward a man staggered into the room. He was deathly pale, and tottered feebly under the tremendous weight of the Senator. The latter looked as anxious as his trembling bearer.

"Darn it! I say," he cried. "Darn it! Don't! Don't!"

"Diavo-lo!" muttered the Italian.

And in the next instant plump went the Senator into the water. A scene then followed that baffles description. The Senator, rising from his unexpected bath, foaming and sputtering, the Italian praying for forgiveness, the loud voices of all the others shouting, calling, and laughing.

The end of it was that they all left as soon as possible, and the Senator indignantly waded back through the water himself. A furious row with the unfortunate bearer, whom the Senator refused to pay, formed a beautifully appropriate termination to their visit to this classic spot. The Senator was so disturbed by this misadventure that his wrath did not subside until his trowsers were thoroughly dried. This, however, was accomplished at last, under the warm sun, and then he looked around him with his usual complacency.

The next spot of interest which attracted them was the Hall of the Subterranean Lake. In this place there is a cavern in the centre of a hill, which is approached by a passage of some considerable length, and in the subterranean cavern a pool of water boils and bubbles. The usual crowd of obliging peasantry surrounded them as they entered the vestibule of this interesting place. It was a dingy-looking chamber, out of which two narrow subterranean passages ran. A grimy, sooty, blackened figure stood before them with torches.

DARN IT!—DON'T.

"Follow!"

This was all that he condescended to say, after lighting his torches and distributing them to his visitors. He stalked off, and stooping down, darted into the low passage-way. The cicerone followed, then Buttons, then Dick, then the Senator, then the Doctor, then Mr. Figgs. The air was intensely hot, and the passage-way grew lower. Moreover, the smoke from the torches filled the air, blinding and choking them.

Mr. Figgs faltered. Fat, and not by any means nimble, he came to a pause about twenty feet from the entrance, and, making a sudden turn, darted out.

The Doctor was tall and unaccustomed to bend his perpendicular form. Half choked and panting heavily he too gave up, and turning about rushed out after Mr. Figgs.

The other three went on bravely. Buttons and Dick, because they had long since made up their minds to see every thing that presented itself, and the Senator, because when he started on an enterprise he was incapable of turning back.

After a time the passage went sloping steeply down. At the bottom of the declivity was a pond of water bubbling and steaming. Down this they ran. Now the slope was extremely slippery, and the subterranean chamber was but faintly illuminated by the torches. And so it came to pass that, as the Senator ran down after the others, they had barely reached the bottom when

Thump!

THUMP!

At once all turned round with a start. Not too quickly; for there lay the Senator, on his back, sliding, in an oblique direction, straight toward the pool. His booted feet were already in the seething waves; his nails were dug into the slippery soil; he was shouting for help.

To grasp his hand, his collar, his leg—to jerk him away and place him upright, was the work of a shorter time than is taken to tell it.

The guide now wanted them to wait till he boiled an egg. The Senator remonstrated, stating that he had already nearly boiled a leg. The Senator's opposition overpowered the wishes of the others, and the party proceeded to return.

Pale, grimy with soot, panting, covered with huge drops of perspiration, they burst into the chamber where the others were waiting—first Buttons, then Dick, then the Senator covered with mud and slime.

The latter gentleman did not answer much to the eager inquiries of his friends, but maintained a solemn silence. The two former loudly and volubly descanted on the accumulated horrors of the subterranean way, the narrow passage, the sulphurous air, the lake of boiling floods.

In this outer chamber their attention was directed to a number of ancient relics. These are offered for sale in such abundance that they may be considered staple articles of commerce in this country.

So skillful are the manufacturers that they can produce unlimited supplies of the following articles, and many others too numerous to mention:

Cumæan and Oscan coins;
Ditto and ditto statuettes;
Ditto and ditto rings;
Ditto and ditto bracelets;
Ditto and ditto images;
Ditto and ditto toilet articles;
Ditto and ditto vases;
Ditto and ditto flasks;
Relics of Parthenope;
Ditto of Baiæ;
Ditto of Misenum;
Ditto of Pæstum;
Ditto of Herculaneum;
Ditto of Pompeii;
Ditto of Capreæ;
Ditto of Capua;
Ditto of Cumæ—

And other places too numerous to mention, all supplied to order; all of which are eaten by rust, and warranted to be covered by the canker and the mould of antiquity.

The good guide earnestly pressed some interesting relics upon their attention, but without marked success. And now, as the hour of din-

ner approached, they made the best of their way to a neighboring inn, which commanded a fine view of the bay. Emerging from the chamber the guide followed them, offering his wares.

"Tell me," he cried, in a sonorous voice, "oh most noble Americans! how much will you give for this most ancient vase?"

"Un' mezzo carlino," said Dick.

"Un' mezzo carlino!!!"

The man's hand, which had been uplifted to display the vase, fell downward as he said this. His tall figure grew less and less distinct as they went further away; but long after he was out of sight the phantom of his reproachful face haunted their minds.

After dinner they went out on the piazza in front of the hotel. Two Spanish ladies were there, whose dark eyes produced an instantaneous effect upon the impressible heart of Buttons.

A TRYING MOMENT.

They sat side by side, leaning against the stone balustrade. They were smoking cigarettes, and the effect produced by waving their pretty hands as they took the cigarettes from their mouths was, to say the least, bewildering.

Buttons awaited his opportunity, and did not have to wait long. Whether it was that they were willing to give the young American a chance, or whether it was really unavoidable, can not be said, but certainly one of the fair Spaniards found that her cigarette had gone out. A pretty look of despair, and an equally pretty gesture of vexation, showed at once the state of things. Upon which Buttons stepped up, and with a bow that would have done honor to Chesterfield, produced a box of scented allumettes, and lighting one, gravely held it forward. The fair Spaniard smiled bewitchingly, and bending forward without hesitation to light her cigarette, brought her rosy lips into bewildering proximity to Buttons's hand.

It was a trying moment.

The amiable expression of the ladies' faces, combined with the softly-spoken thanks of the lady whom Buttons first addressed, encouraged him. The consequence was, that in about five minutes more he was occupying a seat opposite them, chatting as familiarly as though he were an old playmate. Dick looked on with admiration; the others with envy.

"How in the world does it happen," asked the Senator, "that Buttons knows the lingo of every body he meets?"

"He can't help it," said Dick. "These Continental languages are all alike; know one, and you've got the key to the others — that is with French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese."

"And look at him now!" cried the Senator, his eye beaming with cordial admiration.

"You may well look at him!" sighed Dick. "Two such pretty girls as these won't turn up again in a hurry. Spaniards too; I always admired them." And he walked down to the shore humming to himself something about "the girls of Cadiz."

The ladies informed Buttons that they were travelling with their brother, and had been through Russia, Germany, England, France, and were now traversing Italy; did not like the three first-mentioned countries, but were charmed with Italy.

Their *naïveté* was delightful. Buttons found out that the name of one was Lucia, and the other Ida. For the life of him he did not know which he admired most; but, on the whole, rather inclined to the one to whom he had offered the light—Ida.

He was equally frank, and let them know his name, his country, his creed. They were shocked at his creed, pleased with his country, and amused at his name, which they pronounced, "Señor Bo-to-nes."

After about an hour their brother came. He was a small man, very active, and full of vivacity. Instead of looking fiercely at the stranger, he shook hands with him very cordially. Before doing this, however, he took one short, quick survey of his entire person, from his felt hat down to his Congress boots. The consequence was that Buttons deserted his companions, and went off with the ladies.

Dick took the lead of the party on the return home. They viewed the conduct of Buttons

SENATOR AND DONKEY.

with displeasure. The Senator did not show his usual serenity.

The party were all riding on donkeys. To do this on the minute animals which the Neapolitans furnish it is necessary to seat one's self on the stern of the animal, and draw the legs well up, so that they may not trail on the ground. The appearance of the rider from behind is that of a Satyr dressed in the fashion of the nineteenth century. Nothing can be more ridiculous than the sight of a figure dressed in a frock-coat and beaver hat, and terminated by the legs and tail of a donkey.

As it was getting late the party hurried. The donkeys were put on the full gallop. First rode the guide, then the others, last of whom was the Senator, whose great weight was a sore trial to the little donkey.

They neared Pozzuoli, when suddenly the Senator gave his little beast a smart whack to hasten his steps. The donkey lost all patience. With a jump he leaped forward. Away he went, far ahead of the others. The saddle, whose girth was rather old, slipped off. The Senator held on tightly. In vain! Just as he rounded a corner formed by a projecting sand-bank the donkey slipped. Down went the rider; down went the donkey also—rider and beast floundering in the dusty road.

A merry peal of ill-suppressed laughter came from the road-side as he rolled into view. It came from a carriage. In the carriage were the Spaniards—there, too, was Buttons.

CHAPTER IX.

A DRIVE INTO THE COUNTRY.—A FIGHT WITH A VETTURINO.—THE EFFECT OF EATING "HARD BOILED EGGS."—WHAT THEY SAW AT PÆSTUM.—FIVE TEMPLES AND ONE "MILL."

To hire a carriage in Naples for any length of time is by no means an easy thing. It is necessary to hold long commune with the proprietor, to exert all the wiles of masterly diplomacy, to circumvent cunning by cunning, to exert patience, skill, and eloquence. After a decision has been reached, there is but one way in which you can hold your vetturino to his bargain, and that is to bind him to it by securing his name to a contract. Every vetturino has a printed form all ready. If he can't write his name, he does something equally binding and far simpler. He dips his thumb in the ink-bottle and stamps it on the paper. If that is not his signature, what else is it?

"Thus," said one, "Signor Adam signed the marriage-contract with Signora Eva."

After incredible difficulties a contract had been drawn up and signed by the horny thumb of a certain big vetturino, who went by the name of "Il Piccolo." It was to the effect that, for a certain specified sum, Il Piccolo should take the party to Pæstum and back, with a detour to Sorrento.

It was a most delightful morning. All were in the best of spirits. So they started. On for miles through interminable streets of houses that bordered the circular shore, through crowds of sheep, droves of cattle, dense masses of human beings, through which innumerable caleches darted like meteors amid the stars of heaven. Here came the oxen of Southern Italy, stately, sôlemn, long-horned, cream-colored; there marched great droves of Sorrento hogs—

the hog of hogs—a strange but not ill-favored animal, thick in hide, leaden in color, hairless as a hippopotamus. The flesh of the Sorrento hog bears the same relation to common pork that "Lubin's Extrait" bears to the coarse scent of a country grocery. A pork-chop from the Sorrento animal comes to the palate with the force of a new revelation; it is the highest possibility of pork—the apotheosis of the pig! Long lines of macaroni-cooks doing an enormous business; armies of dealers in anisette; crowds of water-carriers; throngs of fishermen, carrying nets and singing merry songs—"Ecco mi!" "Ecco la!"—possible Massaniellos every man of them, I assure you, Sir. And—enveloping all, mingling with all, jostling all, busy with the busiest, idle with the idlest, noisy with the noisest, jolly with the jolliest, the fat, oily, swarthy, rosy—(etc., for further epithets see preceding pages)—*Lazaroni!*

Every moment produces new effects in the ever-shifting scenes of Naples. Here is the reverse of monotony; if any thing becomes wearisome, it is the variety. Here is the monotony of incessant change. The whole city, with all its vast suburbs, lives on the streets.

The Senator wiped his fevered brow. He thought that for crowds, noise, tumult, dash, hurry-skurry, gayety, life, laughter, joyance, and all that incites to mirth, and all that stirs the soul, even New York couldn't hold a candle to Naples.

Rabelais ought to have been a Neapolitan.

Then, as the city gradually faded into the country, the winding road opened up before them with avenues of majestic trees—overhanging, arching midway—forming long aisles of shade. Myrtles, that grew up into trees, scented the air. Interminable groves of figs and oranges spread away up the hill, intermingled with the darker foliage of the olive or cypress.

The mountains come lovingly down to bathe their feet in the sea. The road winds among them. There is a deep valley around which rise lofty hills topped with white villages or ancient towers, or dotted with villas which peep forth from amid dense groves. As far as the eye can reach the vineyards spread away. Not as in France or Germany, miserable sandy fields with naked poles or stunted bushes; but vast extents of trees, among which the vines leap in wild luxuriance, hanging in long festoons from branch to branch, or intertwining with the foliage.

"I don't know how it is," said the Senator, "but I'm cussed if I feel as if this here country was ground into the dust. If it is, it is no bad thing to go through the mill. I don't much wonder that these Italians don't emigrate. If I owned a farm in this neighborhood I'd stand a good deal of squeezin' before I'd sell out and go anywheres else."

At evening they reached Salerno, a watering-place on the sea-coast, and Naples in miniature.

There is no town in Italy without its opera-house or theatre, and among the most vivid and most precious of scenic delights the pantomime commends itself to the Italian bosom. Of course there was a pantomime at Salerno. It was a mite of a house; on a rough calculation thirty feet by twenty; a double tier of boxes; a parquette about twelve feet square; and a stage of about two-thirds that size.

Yet behold what the ingenuity of man can accomplish! On that stage there were performed all the usual exhibitions of human passion, and they even went into the production of great scenic displays, among which a great storm in the forest was most prominent.

Polichinello was in his glory! On this occasion the joke of the evening was an English traveller. The ideal Englishman on the Continent is a never-failing source of merriment. The presence of five Americans gave additional piquancy to the show. The corpulent, double-chinned, red-nosed Englishman, with knee-breeches, shoe-buckles, and absurd coat, stamped, swore, frowned, doubled up his fists, knocked down waiters, scattered gold right and left, was arrested, was tried, was fined; but came forth unterrified from every persecution, to rave, to storm, to fight, to lavish money as before.

How vivid were the flashes of lightning produced by touching off some cotton-wool soaked in alcohol! How terrific the peals of thunder produced by the vibrations of a piece of sheet-iron! Whatever was deficient in mechanical apparatus was readily supplied by the powerful imagination of the Italians, who, though they had often seen all this before, were not at all weary of looking at it, but enjoyed the thousandth repetition as much as the first.

Those merry Italians!

There is an old, old game played by every vetturino.

When our travellers had returned to the hotel, and were enjoying themselves in general conversation, the vetturino bowed himself in. He was a good deal exercised in his mind. With a great preamble he came to the point: As they intended to start early in the morning, he supposed they would not object to settle their little bill now.

"*What!*" shouted Buttons, jumping up. "What bill? Settle a bill? *We* settle a bill? Are you mad?"

"Your excellencies intend to settle the bill, of conrse," said the vetturino, with much phlegm.

"Our excellencies never dreamed of any such thing."

"Not pay? Ha! ha! You jest, Signor."

"Do you see this?" said Buttons, solemnly producing the contract.

"Well?" responded Il Piccolo.

"What is this?"

"Our contract."

"Do you know what it is that you have engaged to do?"

"To take you to Pæstum."

"Yes; to Pæstum and back, with a detour

to Sorrento. Moreover, you engage to supply us with three meals a day and lodgings, for all of which we engage to pay a certain sum. What, then," cried Buttons, elevating his voice, "in the name of all the blessed saints and apostles, do you mean by coming to us about hotel bills?"

"Signor," said the vetturino, meekly, "when I made that contract I fear I was too sanguine."

"Too sanguine!"

"And I have changed my mind since."

"Indeed?"

"I find that I am a poor man."

"Did you just find that out?"

"And that if I carry out this it will ruin me."

"Well?"

"So you'll have to pay for the hotel expenses yourselves," said Il Piccolo, with desperation.

"I will forgive this insufferable insolence," said Buttons, majestically, "on condition that it never occurs again. Do you see that?" he cried, in louder tones.

And he unfolded the contract, which he had been holding in his hand, and sternly pointed to the big blotch of ink that was supposed to be Il Piccolo's signature.

"*Do you see that?*" he cried, in a voice of thunder.

The Italian did not speak.

"And *that?*" he cried, pointing to the signature of the witness.

The Italian opened his mouth to speak, but was evidently nonplused.

"You are in my power!" said Buttons, in a fine melodramatic tone, and with a vivacity of gesture that was not without its effect on the Italian. He folded the contract, replaced it in his breast-pocket, and slapped it with fearful emphasis. Every slap seemed to go to the heart of Il Piccolo.

"If you dare to try to back out of this agreement I'll have you up before the police. I'll enforce the awful penalty that punishes the non-performance of a solemn engagement. I'll have you arrested by the Royal Guards in the name of His Majesty the King, and cause you to be incarcerated in the lowest dungeons of St. Elmo. Besides, I won't pay you for the ride thus far."

With this last remark Buttons walked to the door, and without another word opened it, and motioned to Il Piccolo to leave. The vetturino departed in silence.

On the following morning he made his appearance as pleasant as though nothing had happened.

The carriage rolled away from Salerno. Broad fields stretched away on every side. Troops of villagers marched forth to their labor. As they went on they saw women working in the fields, and men lolling on the fences.

"Do you call that the stuff for a free country?" cried the Senator, whose whole soul rose up in arms against such a sight. "Air these things men? or can such slaves as these women seem to be give birth to any thing but slaves?"

"Bravo!" cried Buttons.

The Senator was too indignant to say more, and so fell into a fit of musing.

"Dick," said Buttons, after a long pause, "you are as pale as a ghost. I believe you must be beginning to feel the miasma from these plains."

"Oh no," said Dick, dolefully; "something worse."

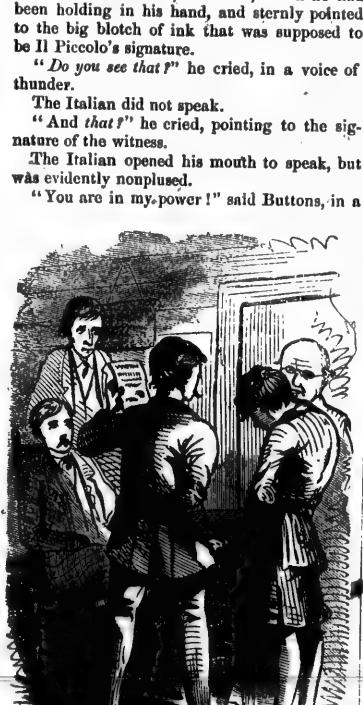
"What's the matter?"

"Do you remember the eggs we had for dinner last evening?"

"Yes."

"That's what's the matter," said Dick, with a groan. "I can't explain; but this, perhaps, will tell thee all I feel."

He took from his pocket a paper and handed it to Buttons. Around the margin were drawn etchings of countless fantastic figures, illustrating the following lines:



"DO YOU SEE THAT?"

A NIGHTMARE.

"*Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire.*"

BY A VICTIM.

Eggs! Eggs!! Eggs!!!
Hard boiled eggs for tea!
And oh! the horrible nightmare dream
They brought to luckless me!

The hippopotamus came;
He sat upon my chest:
The hippopotamus roared "I'll spot him!" as
He trampled upon my breast.

The big iguanodon hunched
And rooted in under me:
The big iguanodon raised by that pan o' done
Overdone eggs for tea.

The ichthyosaurus tried
To roll me up in a ball;
While all the three were grinning at me,
And pounding me, bed and all.

Hip! hip! hurrah!
It was a little black pig,
And a big bull-frog, and a bobtailed dog—
All of them dancing a jig.

And oh, the snakes! the snakes!
And the boa constrictor too!
And the cobra capello—a terrible fellow—
Came to my horrified view.

Snakes and horrible beasts,
Frog, pig, and dog
Hustled me, pushed me, tickled me, crushed me,
Rolled me about like a log.

The little blue devils came on;
They rode on a needle's point;
And the big giraffe, with asthmatic laugh,
And legs all out of joint.

Bats crawled into my ears,
Hopping about in my brain;
And grizzly bears rode up on mares,
And then rode down again.

An antediluvian roared,
In the form of a Brahmin bull;
And a Patagonian squeezed an onion,
Filling my aching eyes full.

The three blue bottles that sat
Upon the historical stones
Sang, "Hey diddle diddle"—two on a fiddle,
The other one on the bones.

"Whoo! whoo! whoo!
Get up, get up, you beauty!
Here come the shaved monkeys, a-riding on donkeys,
Fresh from Bobberty Shooty."

They raised me up in the air,
Bed, body, and all,
And carried me soon to the man in the moon,
At the siege of Sebastopol.

Down, down, down,
Round, round, round,
A whirlpool hurled me out of the world,
And oh, no bottom I found.

Down, down, down,
Whirl, whirl, whirl,
And the Florentine boar was pacing the shore,
His tail all out of curl.

He smoked my favorite pipe,
He blew a cloud of smoke,
He pulled me out with his porcine spout,
And hugging him, I awoke.

"Why, Dick," cried the Senator, "what precious nonsense!"

"It was intended to be so," said Dick.

"Well, but you might as well put on an *idee*. It must have some meaning."

"Not a bit of it. It has no meaning; that is, no more than a dream or a nightmare."

The Senator now began to discuss the nature of poetry, but was suddenly interrupted by a shout—

"The Temples!"

The country about Pæstum is one of the most beautiful in the world. Between the mountains and the sea lies a luxuriant plain, and in the middle of it is the ruined city. The outlines of walls and remnants of gates are there. Above all rise five ancient edifices. They strolled carelessly around. The marble floors of a good many private houses are yet visible, but the stupendous temples are the chief attractions here; above all, the majestic shrine of Neptune.

It was while standing with head thrown back, eyes and mouth opened wide, and thoughts all taken up with a deep calculation, that the Senator was startled by a sudden noise.

Turning hastily he saw something that made him run with the speed of the wind toward the place where the noise arose. Buttons and Dick were surrounded by a crowd of fierce-looking men, who were making very threatening demonstrations. There were at least fifteen. As the Senator ran up from one direction, so came up Mr. Figgs and the Doctor from another.

"What is this?" cried the Senator, bursting in upon the crowd.

A huge Italian was shaking his fist in Buttons's face, and stamping and gesticulating violently.

"These men say we must pay five piastres each to them for strolling about their ground, and Buttons has told this big fellow that he will give them five kicks each. There'll be some kind of a fight. They belong to the Camorra." Dick said all this in a hurried under-tone.

"Camorry, what's that—brigands?"

"All the same."

"They're not armed, anyhow."

Just at this moment Buttons said something which seemed to sting the Italians to the soul, for with a wild shout they rushed forward! The Doctor drew out his revolver. Instantly Dick snatched it from him, and rushing forward, drove back the foremost. None of them were armed.

"Stand off!" he cried, in Italian. "The fight is between this big fellow and my friend. If any one of you interferes I'll put a bullet through him."

The Italians fell back cursing. Buttons instantly divested himself of his coat, vest, and collar. The Italian waited with a grim smile.

At one end were the Senator, the Doctor, Mr. Figgs; at the other the Italian ruffians. In the middle Buttons and his big antagonist. Near them Dick with his pistol.

The scene that followed had better be described in Dick's own words, as he pencilled them in his memorandum-book, from time to time, keeping a sharp lookout with his pistol also. Afterward the description was retouched:

Great mill at Pæstum, between E. Buttons, *Esq., Gentleman, and Italian party called* Beppo.

1st Round.—Beppo defiant, no attitude at all. Buttons assumed an elegant *pose*. Beppo made a succession of wild strokes without any aim, which were parried without effort. After which Buttons landed four blows, one on each peeper, one on the smeller, and one on the mug.

First blood for Buttons. Beppo considerably surprised. Rushed furiously at Buttons, arms flying everywhere, struck over Buttons's head. Buttons lightly made obeisance, and then fired a hundred-pounder on Beppo's left auricular, which had the effect of bringing him to grass. *First knock down for Buttons.*

2d Round.—Foreign population quite dumbfounded. Americans amused but not excited. One hundred to one on Buttons eagerly offered, but no takers. Beppo jumped to his feet like a wild cat. Eyes encircled with ebon auricles, olfactory quite demolished. Made a rush at Buttons, who, being a member of the Dodge Club, dodged him, and landed a rattler on the jugular, which again sent foreign party to grass.

3d Round.—Nimble to the scratch. Beppo badly mashed and raving. Buttons unscathed and laughing. Beppo more cautious made a faint attempt to get into

THE MILL AT PÆSTUM.

Buttons. No go. Tried a little sparring, which was summarily ended by a cannonade from Buttons directly in his countenance.

4th Round.—Foreigners wild. Yelling to their man to go in. (Don't understand a single one of the rules of the P. R. Very benighted. Need missionaries.) Evinced strong determination to go in themselves, but were checked by attitude of referee, who threatened to blow out brains of first man that interfered. Beppo's face magnified considerably. Appearance not at all prepossessing. Much distressed but furious. Made a bound at Buttons, who calmly, and without any apparent effort, met him with a terrific upper cut, which made the Italian's gigantic frame tremble like a ship under the stroke of a big wave. He tottered, and swung his arms, trying to regain his balance, when another annihilator most cleanly administered by Buttons laid him low. A great tumult rose among the foreigners. Beppo lay panting with no determination to come to the scratch. At the expiration of usual time, opponent not appearing, Buttons was proclaimed victor. Beppo very much mashed. Foreigners very greatly cowed. After waiting a short time Buttons resumed his garments and walked off with his friends.

After the victory the travellers left Pæstum on their return.

The road that turns off to Sorrento is the most beautiful in the world. It winds along the shore with innumerable turnings, climbing [illegible] descending into valleys, twining around [illegible]. There are scores of the prettiest [illegible] under the sun, ivy-covered ruins, frowning [illegible] lofty towers, and elegant villas.

At last Sorrento smiles far from a valley which is proverbial for beauty, where, within its shelter of hills, neither the hot blast of midsummer nor the cold winds of winter can ever disturb its repose. This is the valley of perpetual spring, where fruits forever grow, and the seasons all blend together, so that the same orchard shows trees in blossom and bearing fruit.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE WATER, WHERE BUTTONS SEES A LOST IDEA AND GIVES CHASE TO IT, TOGETHER WITH THE HEART-SICKENING RESULTS THEREOF.

On the following morning Buttons and Dick went a little way out of town, and down the steep cliff toward the shore.

It was a classic spot. Here was no less a place than the cave of Polyphemus, where Homer, at least, may have stood, if Ulysses didn't. And here is the identical stone with which the giant was wont to block up the entrance to his cavern.

The sea rolled before. Away down to the right was Vesuvius, steaming from which the eye took in the whole wide sweep of the shore, lined with white villas, with a background of mountains, till the land terminated in bold promontories.

Opposite was the Isle of Capri.

Myriads of white sails flashed across the sea.

One of these arrested the attention of Buttons, and so absorbed him that he stared fixedly at it for half an hour without moving.

At length an exclamation burst from him:

"By Jove! It is! It is!"

"What is? What is?"

"The Spaniards!"

"Where?"

"In that boat."

"Ah!" said Dick, coolly, looking at the object pointed out by Buttons.

It was an English sail-boat, with a small cabin and an immense sail. In the stern were a gentleman and two ladies. Buttons was confident that they were the Spaniards.

THE SPANIARDS.

"Well," said Dick, "what's the use of getting so excited about it?"

"Why, I'm going back to Naples by water!"

"Are you? Then I'll go too. Shall we leave the others?"

"Certainly not, if they want to come with us."

Upon inquiry they found that the others had a strong objection to going by sea. Mr. Figgs preferred the ease of the carriage. The Doctor thought the sea air injurious. The Senator had the honesty to confess that he was afraid of seasickness. They would not listen to persuasion, but were all resolutely bent on keeping to the carriage.

Buttons exhibited a feverish haste in searching after a boat. There was but little to choose from among a crowd of odd-looking fishing-boats that crowded the shore. However, they selected the cleanest from among them, and soon the boat, with her broad sail spread, was darting over the sea.

The boat of which they went in pursuit was far away over near the other shore, taking long tacks across the bay. Buttons headed his boat so as to meet the other on its return tack.

It was a magnificent scene. After exhausting every shore view of Naples, there is nothing like taking to the water. Every thing then appears in a new light. The far, winding cities that surround the shore, the white villages, the purple Apennines, the rocky isles, the frowning volcano.

This is what makes Naples supreme in beauty. The peculiar combinations of scenery that are found there make rivalry impossible. For if you find elsewhere an equally beautiful bay, you will not have so liquid an atmosphere; if you have a shore with equal beauty of outline, and equal grace in its long sweep of towering headland and retreating slope, you will not have so deep a purple on the distant hills. Above all, nowhere else on earth has Nature placed in the very centre of so divine a scene the contrasted terrors of the black volcano.

Watching a chase is exciting; but taking part in it is much more so. Buttons had made the most scientific arrangements. He had calculated that at a certain point on the opposite shore the other boat would turn on a new tack, and that if he steered to his boat to a point about half-way over, he would meet them, without appearing to be in pursuit. He accordingly felt so elated at the idea that he burst forth into song.

The other boat at length had passed well over under the shadow of the land. It did not turn. Further and further over, and still it did not change its course. Buttons still kept the course which he had first chosen; but finding that he was getting far out of the way of the other boat, he was forced to turn the head of his boat closer to the wind, and sail slowly, watching the others.

There was an island immediately ahead of the other boat. What was his dismay at seeing it gracefully pass beyond the outer edge of the island, turn behind it, and vanish. He struck the taffrail furiously with his clenched hand. However, there was no help for it; so, changing his course, he steered in a straight line after the other, to where it had disappeared.

Now that the boat was out of sight Dick did not feel himself called on to watch. So he went forward into the bow, and made himself a snug berth, where he laid down; and lighting his pipe, looked dreamily out through a cloud of smoke upon the charming scene. The tossing of the boat and the lazy flapping of the sails had a soothing influence. His nerves owned the lulling power. His eyelids grew heavy and gently descended.

The wind and waves and islands and sea and sky, all mingled together in a confused mass, came before his mind. He was sailing on clouds, and chasing Spanish ladies through the sky. The drifting currents of the air bore them resistlessly along in wide and never-ending curves—upward in spiral movements toward the zenith; and then off in ever-increasing speed, with ever-widening gyrations, toward the sunset, where the clouds grew red, and lazaroni grinned from behind—

A sudden bang of the huge sail struck by the wind, a wild creaking of the boom, and a smart dash of spray over the bows and into his face waked him from his slumber. He started up, half blinded, to look around. Buttons sat gazing over the waters with an expression of bitter vexation. They had passed the outer point of the island, and had caught a swift current, a chopping sea, and a brisk breeze. The other boat was nowhere to be seen. Buttons had already headed back again.

"I don't see the other boat," said Dick.

Buttons without a word pointed to the left. There she was. She had gone quietly around the island, and had taken the channel between it and the shore. All the time that she had been hidden she was steadily increasing the distance between them.

"There's no help for it," said Dick, "but to keep straight after them."

Buttons did not reply, but leaned back with a sweet expression of patience. The two boats kept on in this way for a long time; but the one in which our friends had embarked was no match at all for the one they were pursuing. At every new tack this fact became more painfully evident. The only hope for Buttons was to regain by his superior nautical skill what he might lose. Those in the other boat had but little skill in sailing. These at length became aware that they were followed, and regarded their pursuers with earnest attention. It did not seem to have any effect.

"They know we are after them at last!" said Dick.

"I wonder if they can recognize us?"

"If they do they have sharp eyes. I'll be hanged if I can recognize them! I don't see how you can."

"Instinct, Dick—instinct!" said Buttons, with animation.

"What's that flashing in their boat?"

"That?" said Buttons. "It's a spy-glass. I didn't notice it before."

"I've seen it for the last half-hour."

"Then they must recognize us. How strange that they don't slacken a little! Perhaps we are not in full view. I will sit a little more out of the shade of the sail, so that they can recognize me."

Accordingly Buttons moved out to a more conspicuous place, and Dick allowed himself to be more visible. Again the flashing brass was seen in the boat, and they could plainly perceive that it was passed from one to the other, while each took a long survey.

"They must be able to see us if they have any kind of a glass at all."

"I should think so," said Buttons, dolefully.

"Are you sure they are the Spaniards?"

"Oh! quite."

"Then I must say they might be a little more civil, and not keep us racing after them forever!"

"Oh, I don't know; I suppose they wouldn't like to sail close up to us."

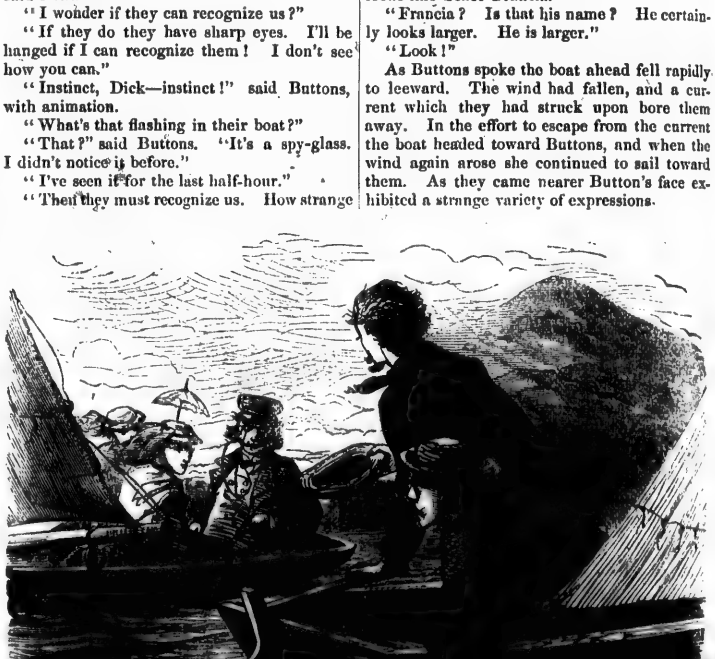
"They needn't sail up to us, but they might give us a chance to hail them."

"I don't think the man they have with them looks like Señor Francia."

"Francia? Is that his name? He certainly looks larger. He is larger."

"Look!"

As Buttons spoke the boat ahead fell rapidly to leeward. The wind had fallen, and a current which they had struck upon bore them away. In the effort to escape from the current the boat headed toward Buttons, and when the wind again arose she continued to sail toward them. As they came nearer Button's face exhibited a strange variety of expressions.



"A THOUSAND P...DONS!"

They met.

In the other boat sat two English ladies and a tall gentleman, who eyed the two young men fixedly, with a "stony British stare."

"A thousand pardons!" said Buttons, rising and bowing. "I mistook you for some acquaintances."

Whereupon the others smiled in a friendly way, bowed, and said something. A few commonplaces were interchanged, and the boats drifted away out of hearing.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SENATOR HAS SUCH A FANCY FOR SEEKING USEFUL INFORMATION!—CURIOUS POSITION OF A WISE, AND WELL-KNOWN, AND DESERVEDLY-POPULAR LEGISLATOR, AND UNDIGNIFIED MODE OF HIS ESCAPE.

It was not much after ten in the morning when Buttons and Dick returned. On reaching the hotel they found Mr. Figgs and the Doctor, who asked them if they had seen the Senator. To which they replied by putting the same question to their questioners.

He had not been seen since they had all been together last. Where was he?

Of course there was no anxiety felt about him, but still they all wished to have him near at hand, as it was about time for them to leave the town. The vetturino was already grumbling, and it required a pretty strong remonstrance from Buttons to silence him.

They had nothing to do but to wait patiently. Mr. Figgs and the Doctor lounged about the sofas. Buttons and Dick strolled about the town. Hearing strains of music as they passed the cathedral, they turned in there to listen to the service. Why there should be service, and full service too, they could not imagine.

"Can it be Sunday, Dick?" said Buttons, gravely.

"Who can tell?" exclaimed Dick, lost in wonder.

The cathedral was a small one, with nave and transept as usual, and in the Italian Gothic style. At the end of the nave stood the high altar, which was now illuminated with wax-candles, while priests officiated before it. At the right extremity of the transept was the organ-loft, a somewhat unusual position; while at the opposite end of the transept was a smaller door. The church was moderately filled. Probably there were as many people there as it ever had. They knelt on the floor with their faces toward the altar. Finding the nave somewhat crowded, Buttons and Dick went around to the door at the end of the transept, and entered there. A large space was empty as far as the junction with the nave. Into this the two young men entered, very reverently, and on coming near to the place where the other worshipers were they knelt down in the midst of them.

While looking before him, with his mind full of thoughts called up by the occasion, and while the grand music of one of Mozart's masses was filling his soul, Buttons suddenly felt his arm twitched. He turned. It was Dick.

Buttons was horrified. In the midst of this solemn scene the young man was convulsed with laughter. His features were working, his lips moving, as he tried to whisper something which his laughter prevented him from saying, and tears were in his eyes. At last he stuck his handkerchief in his mouth and bowed down very low, while his whole frame shook. Some of the worshipers near by looked scandalized, others shocked, others angry. Buttons felt vexed. At last Dick raised his face and rolled his eyes toward the organ-loft, and instantly bowed his head again. Buttons looked up mechanically, following the direction of Dick's glance. The next instant he too fell forward, tore his handkerchief out of his pocket, while his whole frame shook with the most painful convulsion of laughter.

And how dreadful is such a convulsion in a solemn place! In a church, amid worshipers; perhaps especially amid worshipers of another creed, for then one is suspected of offering deliberate insult. So it was here. People near saw the two young men, and darted angry looks at them.

Now what was it that had so excited two young men, who were by no means inclined to offer insult to any one, especially in religious matters?

It was this: As they looked up to the organ-loft they saw a figure there.

The organ projected from the wall about six feet; on the left side was the handle worked by the man who blew it, and a space for the choir. On the right was a small narrow space not more than about three feet wide, and it was in this space that they saw the figure which produced such an effect on them.

It was the Senator. He stood there erect, bare-headed of course, with confusion in his face and vexation and bewilderment. The sight of him was enough—the astonishing position of the man, in such a place at such a time. But the Senator was looking eagerly for help. And he had seen them enter, and all his soul was in his eyes, and all his eyes were fixed on those two.

As Dick looked up startled and confounded at the sight, the Senator projected his head as far forward as he dared, frowned, nodded, and then began working his lips violently as certain deaf and dumb people do, who converse by such movements, and can understand what words are said by the shape of the mouth in uttering them. But the effect was to make the Senator look like a man who was making grimaces for a wager, like those in Victor Hugo's "Nôtre Dame." As such the apparition was so overpowering that neither Buttons nor Dick dared to look up for some time. What made it worse, each was conscious that the other was laughing, so that self-control was all the more difficult. Worse still, each knew that this figure in the

organ-loft was watching them with his hungry glance, ready the moment that they looked up to begin his grimaces once more.

"That poor Senator!" thought Buttons; "how did he get there? Oh, how did he get there?"

Yet how could he be rescued? Could he be? No. He must wait till the service should be over.

Meanwhile the young men mustered sufficient courage to look up again, and after a mighty struggle to gaze upon the Senator for a few seconds at a time at least. There he stood, projecting forward his anxious face, making faces as each one looked up.

THE SENATOR.

Now the people in the immediate vicinity of the two young men had noticed their agitation as has already been stated, and, moreover, they had looked up to see the cause of it. They too saw the Senator. Others again, seeing their neighbors looking up, did the same, until at last all in the transept were staring up at the odd-looking stranger.

As Buttons and Dick looked up, which they could not help doing often, the Senator would repeat his mouthings, and nods, and becks, and looks of entreaty. The consequence was, that the people thought the stranger was making faces at them. Three hundred and forty-seven honest people of Sorrento thus found themselves shamefully insulted in their own church by a barbarous foreigner, probably an Englishman, no doubt a heretic. The other four hundred and thirty-six who knelt in the nave knew nothing about it. They could not see the organ-loft at all. The priests at the high altar could not see it, so that they were uninterrupted in their duties. The singers in the organ-loft saw nothing, for the Senator was concealed from their view. Those therefore who saw him were the people in the transept, who now kept staring fixedly, and with angry eyes, at the man in the loft.

There was no chance of getting him out of that before the service was over, and Buttons saw that there might be a serious tumult when the Senator came down among that wrathful crowd. Every moment made it worse. Those in the nave saw the agitation of those in the transept, and got some idea of the cause.

At last the service was ended; the singers departed, the priests retired, but the congregation remained. Seven hundred and eighty-three human beings waiting to take vengeance on the miscreant who had thrown ridicule on the Holy Father by making faces at the faithful as they knelt in prayer. Already a murmur arose on every side.

"A heretic! A heretic! A blasphemer! He has insulted us!"

Buttons saw that a bold stroke alone could save them. He burst into the midst of the throng followed by Dick.

"Fly!" he cried. "Fly for your lives! *It is a madman!* Fly! Fly!"

A loud cry of terror arose. Instantaneous conviction flashed on the minds of all. A madman! Yes. He could be nothing else.

A panic arose. The people recoiled from before that terrible madman. Buttons sprang up to the loft. He seized the Senator's arm and dragged him down. The people fled in horror. As the Senator emerged he saw seven hundred and eighty-three good people of Sorrento scampering away like the wind across the square in front of the cathedral.

On reaching the hotel he told his story. He had been peering about in search of useful information, and had entered the cathedral. After going through every part he went up into the organ-loft. Just then the singers came. Instead of going out like a man, he dodged them from some absurd cause or other, with a half idea that he would get into trouble for intruding. The longer he stayed the worse it was for him. At last he saw Buttons and Dick enter, and tried to make signals.

"Well," said Buttons, "we had better leave. The Sorrentonians will be around here soon to see the maniac. They will find out all

about him, and make us acquainted with Lynch law."

In a quarter of an hour more they were on their way back to Naples.

CHAPTER XII.

HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII, AND ALL THAT THE SIGHT OF THOSE FAMOUS PLACES PRODUCED ON THE MINDS OF THE DODGE CLUB.

THEY had already visited Herculaneum, but the only feeling which had been awakened by the sight of that ill-fated city was one of unmitigated disgust. As honesty was the chief characteristic of the whole party, they did not hesitate to express themselves with the utmost freedom on this subject. They hoped for better things from Pompeii. At any rate Pompeii was above ground; what might be there would be visible. No fuss with torches. No humbugging with lanterns No wandering through long black passages. No mountains bringing forth mice.

Their expectations were encouraged as they walked up the street of Tombs leading to the Herculaneum Gate. Tombs were all around, any quantity, all sizes, little black vaults full of pigeon-holes. These they narrowly examined, and when the guide wasn't looking they filled their pockets with the ashes of the dead.

"Strange," quoth the Senator, musingly, "that these ancient Pompey fellers should pick out this kind of a way of getting buried. This must be the reason why people speak of urns and ashes when they speak of dead people."

They walked through the Villa of Diomedes. They were somewhat disappointed. From guide-books, and especially from the remarkably well-got-up Pompeian court at Sydenham Palace, Buttons had been led to expect something far grander. But in this, the largest house in the city, what did he find? Mites of rooms, in fact closets, in which even a humble modern would find himself rather crowded. There was scarcely a decent-sized apartment in the whole establishment, as they all indignantly declared. The cellars were more striking. A number of earthern vessels of enormous size were in one corner.

"What are these?" asked the Senator.

"Wine jars."

"What?"

"Wine jars. They didn't use wooden casks."

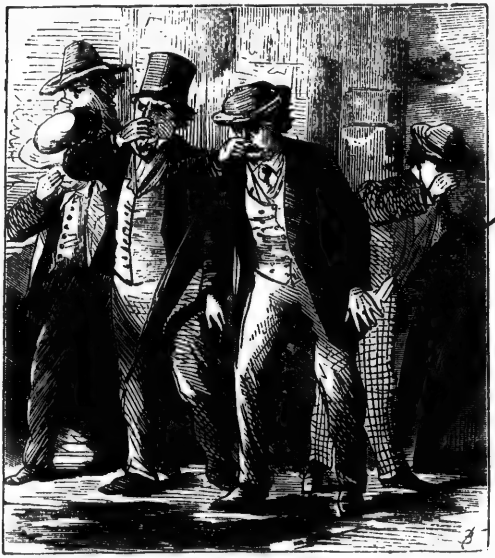
"The more fools they. Now do you mean to say that wooden casks are not infinitely more convenient than these things that can't stand up without they are leaned against the wall? Pho!"

At one corner the guide stopped, and pointing down, said something.

"What does he say?" asked the Senator.

"He says if you want to know how the Pompeians got choked, stoop down and smell that.

VILLA OF DIOMEDES.



PHEW!

Every body who comes here is expected to smell this particular spot, or he can't say that he has seen Pompeii."

So down went the five on their knees, and up again faster than they went down. With one universal shout of: "Phew-w-w-w-w-h-h-h!!!"

It was a torrent of sulphurous vapor that they inhaled.

"Now, I suppose," said the Senator, as soon as he could speak, "that that there comes direct in a bee-line through a subterranean tunnel right straight from old Vesuvius."

"Yes, and it was this that suggested the famous scheme for extinguishing the volcano."

"How? What famous scheme?"

"Why, an English stock-broker came here last year, and smelled this place, as every one must do. An idea struck him. He started up. He ran off without a word. He went straight to London. There he organized a company. They propose to dig a tunnel from the sea to the interior of the mountain. When all is ready they will let in the water. There will be a tremendous hiss. The volcano will belch out steam for about six weeks; but the result will be that the fires will be put out forever."

From the Villa of Diomedes they went to the gate where the guard-house is seen. Buttons told the story of the sentinel who died there on duty, embellishing it with a few new features of an original character.

"Now that may be all very well," said the Senator, "but don't ask me to admire that chap, or the Roman army, or the system. It was all hollow. Why, don't you see the man was a blockhead? He hadn't sense enough to see that when the whole place was going to the dogs, it was no good stopping to guard it. He'd much better have cleared out and saved his precious life for the good of his country. Do you suppose a Yankee would act that way?"

"I should suppose not."

"That man, Sir, was a machine, and nothing more. A soldier must know something else than merely obeying orders."

By this time they had passed through the gate and stood inside. The street opened before them for a considerable distance with houses on each side. Including the sidewalks it might have been almost twelve feet wide. As only the lower part of the walls of the houses was standing, the show that they made was not imposing. There was no splendor in the architecture or the material, for the style of the buildings was extremely simple, and they were made with brick covered with stucco.

After wandering silently through the streets the Senator at length burst forth:

"I say it's an enormous imposition!"

"What?" inquired Buttons, faintly.

"Why, the whole system of Cyclopedias, Panoramas, Books of Travel, Woodbridge's Geography, Sunday-school Books—"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean the descriptions they give of this place. The fellows who write about it get into the heroics, and what with their descriptions, and pictures, and moralizing, you believe it is a second Babylon. It don't seem possible for any of them to tell the truth. Why, there isn't a single decent-sized house in the place. Oh, it's small! it's small!"

"It certainly might be larger."

"I know," continued the Senator, with a majestic wave of his hand—"I know that I'm expected to find this here scene very impressive; but I'll be hanged if I'm satisfied. Why, in the name of Heaven, when they give us pictures of the place, can't they make things of the right size? Why, I've seen a hundred pictures of that gate. They make it look like a triumphant arch; and now that I'm here, durn me if I can't touch the top of it when I stand on tiptoe."

In all his walk the Senator found only one thing that pleased him. This was the cele-

brated Pompeian institution of a shop under the dwelling-house.

"Whenever I see any signs of any thing like trade among these ancients," said he, "I respect them. And what is more satisfactory than to see a bake-shop or an eating-saloon in the lower story of a palace?"

Their walk was terminated by the theatre and amphitheatre. The sight of these were more satisfactory to the Senator.

"Didn't these fellows come it uncommon strong though in the matter of shows?" he asked, with considerable enthusiasm. "Hey? Why, we haven't got a single travelling circus, menagerie and all, that could come any way near to this. After all, this town might have looked well enough when it was all bran-new and painted up. It might have looked so then; but, by thunder! it looks any thing but that now. What makes me mad is to see every traveller pretend to get into raptures about it now. Raptures be hanged! I ask you, as a sensible man, *is* there any thing here equal to any town of the same population in Massachusetts?"

Although the expectations which he had formed were not quite realized, yet Buttons found much to excite interest after the first disappointment had passed away. Dick excited the Senator's disgust by exhibiting those raptures which the latter had condemned.

The Doctor went by the Guide-book altogether, and regulated his emotions accordingly. Having seen the various places enumerated there, he wished no more. As Buttons and Dick wished to stroll further among the houses, the other three waited for them in the amphitheatre, where the Senator beguiled the time by giving his "idee" of an ancient show.

It was the close of day before the party left. At the outer barrier an official politely examined them. The result of the examination was that the party was compelled to disgorge a number of highly interesting souvenirs, consisting of lava, mosaic stones, ashes, plaster, marble chips, pebbles, bricks, a bronze hinge, a piece of bone, a small rag, a stick, etc.

The official apologized with touching politeness: "It was only a form," he said. "Yet he must do it. For look you, Signori," and

A STREET IN POMPEII.

here he shrugged up his shoulders, rolled his eyes, and puffed out his lips in a way that was possible to none but an Italian, "were it not thus the entire city would be carried away piecemeal!"

CHAPTER XIII.

VESUVIUS.—WONDERFUL ASCENT OF THE CONE.—WONDERFUL DESCENT INTO THE CRATER.—AND MOST WONDERFUL DISAPPEARANCE OF MR. FIGGS, AFTER WHOM ALL HIS FRIENDS GO, WITH THEIR LIVES IN THEIR HANDS.—GREAT SENSATION AMONG SPECTATORS.

To every visitor to Naples the most prominent object is Vesuvius. The huge form of the volcano forever stands before him. The long pennon of smoke from its crater forever floats out triumphantly in the air. Not in the landscape only, but in all the picture-shops. In these establishments they really seem to deal in nothing but prints and paintings of Vesuvius.

It was a lovely morning when a carriage, filled with Americans, drew up at an inn near the foot of the mountain. There were guides without number waiting, like beasts of prey, to fall on them; and all the horses of the country—a wonderful lot—an amazing lot—a lean, cranky, raw-boned, ill-fed, wall-eyed, ill-natured, sneaking, ungainly, half-foundered, half-starved lot; afflicted with all the diseases that horse-flesh is heir to. There were no others, so but little time was wasted. All were on an equal footing. To have a preference was out of the question, so they amused themselves with picking out the ugliest.

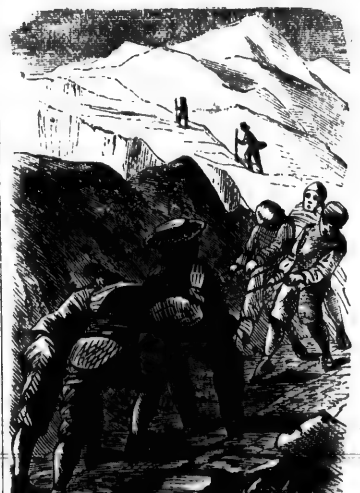
When the horses were first brought out Mr. Figgs looked uneasy, and made some mysterious remarks about walking. He thought such nags were an imposition. He vowed they could go faster on foot. On foot! The others scouted the idea. Absurd! Perhaps he wasn't used to such beasts. Never mind. He mustn't be proud. Mr. Figgs, however, seemed to have reasons which were strictly private, and announced his intention of walking. But the others would not hear of such a thing. They insisted. They forced him to mount. This Mr. Figgs at length accomplished, though he got up on the wrong side, and nearly pulled his horse over backward by pulling at the curb-rein, shouting all the time, in tones of agony, "Who-a!"

At length they all set out, and, with few interruptions, arrived at a place half-way up the mountain called The Hermitage. Here they rested, and leaving their horses behind, walked on over a barren region to the foot of the cone. All around was the abomination of desolation. Craggy rocks, huge, disjointed masses of shattered lava-blocks, cooled off into the most grotesque shapes, mixed with ashes, scoriæ, and pumice-stones. The cone towered frowningly above their heads. Looking up, the aspect was not enticing. A steep slope ran up for an immense distance till it touched the smoky canopy. On one side it was covered with loose sand, but in other places it was all overlaid with masses of lava fragments. The undertaking seemed prodigious.

The Senator looked up with a weary smile, but did not falter; the Doctor thought they would not be able to get up to the top, and proposed returning; the others declined; whereupon the Doctor slowly sauntered back to the Hermitage. Mr. Figgs, whom the ride had considerably shaken, expressed a desire to ascend, but felt doubtful about his wind. Dick assured him that he would find plenty when he got to the top. The guides also came to his relief. Did he want to go? Behold them. They had chairs to carry him up or straps to pull him. Their straps were so made that they could envelop the traveller and allow him to be pulled comfortably up. So Mr. Figgs gracefully resigned himself to the guides, who in a short time had adjusted their straps, and led him to the foot of the cone.

Now for the ascent.

Buttons went first. Like a young chamois this youth bounded up, leaping from rock to rock, and steering in a straight line for the summit. Next the Senator, who mounted slowly and perseveringly, as though he had a solemn duty to perform, and was determined to do it thoroughly. Then came Dick. More fitful. A few steps upward; then a rest; then a fresh start; followed by another rest. At length he sat down about one-third of the way up and took a smoke. Behind him Mr. Figgs toiled



THE ASCENT OF VESUVIUS.

up, pulled by the panting guides. Three stout men in front—two others boosting from behind.

A long description might be given of this remarkable ascent. How Mr. Figgs aggravated the guides almost beyond endurance by mere force of inertia. Having committed himself to them he did it thoroughly, and not by one single act of exertion did he lessen their labor. They pulled, pushed, and shouted; then they rested; then they rose again to pull, to push, to shout, and to rest as before; then they implored him in the most moving terms to do something to help them, to put one foot before the other, to brace himself firmly—in short, to do any thing.

In vain. Mr. Figgs didn't understand a word. He was unmovable. Then they threatened to drop him and leave him half-way. The threat was disregarded. Mr. Figgs sat on a stone while they rested and smiled benignantly at them. At last, maddened by his impassibility, they screamed at him and at one another with furious gesticulations, and then tearing off the straps, they hurried up the slope, leaving him on the middle of the mount to take care of himself.

It might be told how the Senator toiled up slowly but surely, never stopping till he had gained the summit; or how Buttons, who arrived there first, spent the time in exploring the mysteries of this elevated region; or how Dick stopped every twenty paces to rest and smoke; how he consumed much time and much tobacco; and how he did not gain the summit until twenty minutes after the serene face of the Senator had confronted the terrors of the crater.

Before these three there was a wonderful scene. Below them lay the steep sides of the cone, a waste of hideous ruin—

> "Rocks, crags, and mounds confusedly hurled,
> The fragments of a ruined world."

Before them was the crater, a vast abyss, the bottom of which was hidden from sight by dense clouds of sulphurous smoke which forever ascended. Far away on the other side rose the opposite wall of the abyss—black, rocky cliffs that rose precipitously upward. The side on which they stood sloped down at a steep angle for a few hundred feet, and then went abruptly downward. A mighty wind was blowing and carried all the smoke away to the opposite side of the crater, so that by getting down into the shelter of a rock they were quite comfortable.

The view of the country that lay beneath was superb. There lay Naples with its suburbs, extending for miles along the shore, with Portici, Castellamare, and the vale of Sorrento. There rose the hills of Baiæ, the rock of Ischia, and the Isle of Capri. There lay countless vineyards, fields forever green, groves of orange and fig-trees, clusters of palms and cypresses. Mountains ascended all around, with many heights crowned with castles or villages. There lay the glorious Bay of Naples, the type of perfect beauty. Hundreds of white sails dotted the intense blue of its surface. Ships were there at anchor, and in full sail. Over all was a sky such as is seen only in Italy, with a depth of blue, which, when seen in paintings, seems to the inexperienced eye like an exaggeration.

The guides drew their attention from all this beauty to a solid fact. This was the cooking of an egg by merely burying it in the hot sand for a few minutes.

Buttons now proposed to go down into the crater. The guides looked aghast.

"Why not?"

"Impossible, Signor. It's death."

"Death? Nonsense! come along and show us the way."

"The way? There is no way. No one ever dares to go down. Where can we go to? Do you not see that beyond that point where the rock projects it is all a precipice?"

"That point? Well, that is the very spot I wish to go to. Come along."

"Never, Signor."

"Then I'll go."

"Don't. For the sake of Heaven, and in the name of the most Holy Mother, of St. Peter in chains, of all the blessed Apostles and Martyrs, the glorious Saints and—"

"Blessed Botheration," cried Buttons, abruptly turning his back and preparing to descend.

"Are you in earnest, Buttons?" asked Dick.

"Are you really going down?"

"Certainly."

"Oh, then I'll go too."

Upon this the others warned, rebuked, threatened, remonstrated, and begged. In vain. The Senator interposed the authority of years and wisdom. But to no purpose. With much anxiety he sat on the edge of the crater, looking for the result and expecting a tragedy.

The slope down which they ventured was covered with loose sand. At each step the treacherous soil slid beneath them. It was a mad and highly reprehensible undertaking. Nevertheless down they went—further and further. The kind heart of the Senator felt a pang at every step. His voice sounded mournfully through the rolling smoke that burst through a million crevices, and at times hid the adventurers from view. But down they went. Sometimes they slid fearfully. Then they would wait and cautiously look around. Sometimes the vapors covered them with such dense folds that they had to cover their faces.

"If they ain't dashed to pieces they'll be suffocated—sure!" cried the Senator, starting up, and unable to control his feelings. "I can't stand this," he muttered, and he too stepped down.

The guides looked on in horror. "Your blood will be on your own heads!" they cried.

As the Senator descended the smoke entered his eyes, mouth, and nostrils, making him cough and sneeze fearfully. The sand slid; the heat under the surface pained his feet; every step made it worse. However, he kept on bravely. At length he reached the spot where the others were standing.

THE DESCENT OF VESUVIUS.

At the foot of the declivity was an angular rock which jutted out for about twelve feet. It was about six feet wide. Its sides went down precipitously. The Senator walked painfully to where they were standing. It was a fearful scene. All around arose the sides of the crater, black and rocky, perpendicular on all sides, except the small slope down which they had just descended—a vast and gloomy circumference. But the most terrific sight lay beneath.

The sides of the crater went sheer down to a great depth enclosing a black abyss which in the first excitement of the scene the startled fancy might well imagine extending to the bowels of the earth from which there came rolling up vast clouds dense black sulphurous which at times completely encircled them shutting out every thing from view filling eyes nose mouth with fumes of brimstone forcing them to hold the tails of their coats or the skirts it's all the same over their faces so as not to be altogether suffocated while again after a while a fierce blast of wind driving downward would hurl the smoke away and dashing it against the other side of the crater gather it up in dense volumes of blackest smoke in thick clouds which rolled up the flinty cliffs and reaching the summit bounded fiercely out into the sky to pass on and be seen from afar as that dread pennant of Vesuvius which is the sign and symbol of its mastery over the earth around it and the inhabitants thereof ever changing and in all its changes watched with awe by fearful men who read in those changes their own fate now taking heart as they see it more tenuous in its consistency anon shuddering as they see it gathering in denser folds and finally awe-stricken and all overcome as they see the thick black cloud rise proudly up to heaven in a long straight column at whose upper termination the colossal pillar spreads itself out and shows to the startled gaze the dread symbol of the cypress tree the herald of earthquakes eruptions and——

——There—I flatter myself that in the way of description it would not be easy to beat the above. I just throw it off as my friend Titmarsh, poor fellow, once said, to show what I could do if I tried. I have decided not to put punctuation marks there, but rather to let each reader supply them for himself. They are oft-

en in the way, particularly to the writer, when he has to stop in the full flow of a description and insert them—

But—

We left our friends down in the crater of Vesuvius. Of course they hurried out as soon as they could, and mounting the treacherous steep they soon regained the summit, where the guides had stood bawling piteously all the time.

Then came the descent. It was not over the lava blocks, but in another place, which was covered with loose sliding sand. Away they started.

Buttons ahead, went with immense strides down the slope. At every step the sliding sand carried him about ten feet further, so that each step was equal to about twenty feet. It was like flying. But it was attended by so many falls that the descent of Buttons and Dick was accomplished as much by sliding and rolling as by walking.

The Senator was more cautious. Having fallen once or twice, he tried to correct this tendency by walking backward. Whenever he found himself falling he would let himself go, and thus, on his hands and knees, would let himself slide for a considerable distance. This plan gave him immense satisfaction.

"It's quite like coasting," said he, after he had reached the bottom; "only it does come a little hard on the trowsers."

On their arrival at the Hermitage to their surprise they saw nothing of Mr. Figgs. The Doctor had been sleeping all the time, but the landlord said he had not been that way. As they knew that the neighborhood of Vesuvius was not always the safest in the world, they all went back at once to search after him.

WHERE'S FIGGS?

Arriving at the foot of the cone they went everywhere shouting his name. There was no response. They skirted the base of the cone. They walked up to where he had been. They saw nothing. The guides who had thus far been with them now said they had to go. So they received their pay and departed.

"Of all the mean, useless, chicken-hearted dolts that ever I see," said the Senator, "they are the wust!"

But meanwhile there was no Figgs. They began to feel anxious. At last Buttons, who had been up to where Mr. Figgs was left, thought he saw traces of footsteps in the sand that was nearest. He followed these for some time, and at last shouted to the others. The others went to where he was. They saw an Italian with him—an ill-looking, low-browed rascal, with villain stamped on every feature.

"This fellow says he saw a man who answers the description of Figgs go over in that direction," said Buttons, pointing toward the part of the mountain which is furthest from the sea.

"There? What for?"

"I don't know."

"Is there any danger?"

"I think so—Figgs may have had to go—who knows?"

"Well," said the Senator, "we must go after him."

"What arms have you?" said the Doctor. "Don't show it before this rascal."

"I have a bowie-knife," said Buttons.

"So have I," said Dick.

"And I," said the Senator, "am sorry to say that I have nothing at all."

"Well, I suppose we must go," said the Doctor. "My revolver is something. It is a double revolver, of peculiar shape."

Without any other thought they at once prepared to venture into a district that for all they knew might swarm with robbers. They had only one thought, and that was to save Figgs.

"Can this man lead us?" asked Dick.

"He says he can take us along where he saw Figgs go, and perhaps we may see some people who can tell us about him."

"Perhaps we can," said the Senator, grimly.

They then started off with the Italian at their head. The sun was by this time within an hour's distance from the horizon, and they had no time to lose. So they walked rapidly. Soon they entered among hills and rocks of lava, where the desolation of the surrounding country began to be modified by vegetation. It was quite difficult to keep their reckoning, so as to know in what direction they were going, but they kept on nevertheless.

All of them knew that the errand was a dangerous one. All of them knew that it would be better if they were armed. But no one said any thing of the kind. In fact, they felt such

confidence in their own pluck and resolution that they had no doubt of success.

At length they came to a place where trees were on each side of the rough path. At an opening here three men stood. Buttons at once accosted them and told his errand. They looked at the Americans with a sinister smile.

"Don't be afraid of us," said Buttons, quietly. "We're armed with revolvers, but we won't hurt you. Just show us where our friend is, for we're afraid he has lost his way."

At this strange salutation the Italians looked puzzled. They looked at their guns, and then at the Americans. Two or three other men came out from the woods at the same time, and stood in their rear. At length as many as ten men stood around them.

"What are you staring at?" said Buttons again. "You needn't look so frightened. Americans only use their revolvers against thieves."

The Doctor at this, apparently by accident, took out his revolver. Standing a little on one side, he fired at a large crow on the top of a tree. The bird fell dead. He then fired five other shots just by way of amusement, laughing all the time with the Senator.

"You see," said he—"ha, ha—we're in a fix—ha, ha—and I want to show them what a revolver is?"

"But you're wasting all your shot."

"Not a bit of it. See!"

And saying this he drew a second chamber from his pocket, and taking the first out of the pistol inserted the other. He then fired another shot. All this was the work of a few moments. He then took some cartridges and filled the spare chamber once more.

The Italians looked on this display in great astonishment, exchanging significant glances, particularly when the Doctor changed the chambers. The Americans, on the contrary, took good care to manifest complete indifference. The Italians evidently thought they were all armed like the Doctor. Naturally enough, too, for if not, why should they venture here and talk so loftily to them? So they were puzzled, and in doubt. After a time one who appeared to be their leader stepped aside with two or three of the men, and talked in a low voice, after which he came to Buttons and said:

"Come, then, and we will show you."

"Go on."

The Captain beckoned to his men. Six of them went to the rear. Buttons saw the manœuvre, and burst into roars of laughter. The Italians looked more puzzled than ever.

"Is that to keep us from getting away?" he cried—"ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! Well, well!"

"He's putting a guard behind us. Laugh like fury, boys," said Buttons, in English.

Whereupon they all roared, the tremendous laughter of the Senator coming in with fearful effect.

"There's nothing to laugh at," said the man who appeared to be captain, very sulkily.

"It's evident that you Italians don't understand late improvements," said Buttons. "But come, hurry on."

The Captain turned and walked ahead sullenly.

"It's all very well to laugh," said the Doctor, in a cheerful tone; "but suppose those devils behind us shoot us."

"I think if they intended to do that the Captain would not walk in front. No, they want to take us alive, and make us pay a heavy ransom."

After this the Club kept up an incessant chatter. They talked over their situation, but could as yet decide upon nothing. It grew dark at length. The sun went down. The usual rapid twilight came on.

"Dick," said the Doctor, "when it gets dark enough I'll give you my pistol, so that you may show off with it as if it were yours."

"All right, my son," said Dick.

Shortly after, when it was quite dark, the Doctor slipped the pistol into the side-pocket of Dick's coat. At length a light appeared before them. It was an old ruin which stood upon an eminence. Where they were not a soul of them could tell. Dick declared that he smelt salt water.

The light which they saw came from the broken windows of a dilapidated hall belonging to the building. They went up some crumbling steps, and the Captain gave a peculiar knock at the door. A woman opened it. A bright light streamed out. Dick paused for a moment, and took the Doctor's pistol from his pocket. He held it up, and pretended to arrange the chamber. Then he carelessly put it in his pocket again.

"You haven't bound them?" said the woman who opened the door to the Captain.

"Meaning us, my joy?" said Buttons, in Italian. "Not just yet, I believe, and not for some time. But how do you all do?"

The woman stared hard at Buttons, and then at the Captain. There were eight or ten women here. It was a large hall, the roof still entire, but with the plaster all gone. A bright fire burned at one end. Torches burned around. On a stool near the fire was a familiar form—a portly, well-fed form—with a merry face—a twinkle in his eye—a pipe in his mouth—calmly smoking—apparently quite at home, though his feet were tied—in short, Mr. Figgs!

"Figgs, my boy!"

One universal shout and the Club surrounded their companion. In an instant Buttons cut his bonds.

"Bless you—bless you, my children!" cried Figgs. "But how the (Principal of Evil) did you get here? These are brigands. I've just been calculating how heavy a bill I would have to foot."

The brigands saw the release of Figgs, and stood looking gloomily at their singular prisoners, not quite knowing whether they were prisoners or not, not knowing what to do. Each

member of the Club took the most comfortable seat he could find near the fire, and began talking vehemently. Suddenly Buttons jumped up.

"A thousand pardons—I really forgot that there were ladies present. Will you not sit here and give us the honor of your company?"

He made a profound bow and looked at several of them. They looked puzzled, then pleased; then they all began to titter.

"Signor makes himself very much at home," said one, at length.

"And where could there be a pleasanter place? This old hall, this jolly old fire, and this delightful company!"

Another bow. The Captain looked very sullen still. He was evidently in deep perplexity.

"Come, cheer up there!" said Buttons. "We won't do you any harm; we won't even complain to the authorities that we found our friend here. Cheer up! Have you any thing to eat, most noble Captain?"

The Captain turned away.

Meanwhile Figgs had told the story of his capture. After resting for a while on the slope he prepared to descend, but seeing sand further away he went over toward it and descended there. Finding it very dangerous or difficult to go down straight he made the descent obliquely, so that when he reached the foot of the cone he was far away from the point at which he had started to make the ascent. Arriving there, he sat down to rest after his exertions. Some men came toward him, but he did not think much about it. Suddenly, before he knew what was up, he found himself a prisoner. He had a weary march, and was just getting comfortable as they came in.

As they sat round the fire they found it very comfortable. Like many evenings in Italy, it was damp and quite chilly. They laughed and talked, and appeared to be any thing but captives in a robber's hold. The Captain had been out for some time, and at length returned. He was now very cheerful. He came laughingly up to the fire.

"Well, Signori Americani, what do you think of your accommodation?"

"Delightful! charming!" cried Buttons and Dick.

"If the ladies would only deign to smile on us—"

"Aha! You are a great man for the ladies!" said the Captain.

"Who is not?" said Buttons, sententiously.

After a few pleasant words the Captain left again.

"He has some scheme in his villainous head," said Buttons.

"To drug us," said the Doctor.

"To send for others," said Dick.

"To wait till we sleep, and then fall on us," said Mr. Figgs.

"Well, gentlemen," said the Senator, drawing himself up, "we're more than a match for them. Why, what are these brigands? Is there a man of them who isn't a poor, miserable, cowardly cuss? Not one. If we are capt-

MR. FIGGS.

THE LADIES.

ured by such as these we deserve to be captives all our lives."

"If we don't get off soon we'll have a good round sum to pay," said Mr. Figgs.

"And that I object to," said Buttons; "for I promised my Governor solemnly that I wouldn't spend more than a certain sum in Europe, and I won't."

"For my part," said the Doctor, "I can't afford it."

"And I would rather use the amount which they would ask in some other way," said Dick.

"That's it, boys! You're plucky. Go in! We'll fix their flints. The American eagle is soaring, gentlemen—let him ascend to the zenith. Go it! But mind now—don't be too hasty. Let's wait for a time to see further developments."

"Richard, my boy, will you occupy the time by singing a hymn?" continued the Senator. "I see a guitar there."

Dick quietly got up, took the guitar, and, tuning it, began to sing. The brigands were still in a state of wonder. The women looked shy. Most of the spectators, however, were grinning at the eccentric Americans. Dick played and sang a great quantity of songs, all of a comic character.

The Italians were fond of music, of course. Dick had a good voice. Most of his songs had choruses, and the whole Club joined in. The Italians admired most the nigger songs. "Oh, Susannah!" was greeted with great applause. So was "Doo-dah;" and the Italians themselves joined energetically in the chorus. But the song that they loved best was "Ole Virginny Shore." This they called for over and over, and as they had quick ears they readily caught the tune; so that, finally, when Dick, at their earnest request, sang it for the seventh time, they whistled the air all through, and joined in with a thundering chorus. The Captain came in at the midst of it, and listened with great delight. After Dick had laid down his instrument he approached the Americans.

"Well, ole hoss," said the Senator, "won't you take an arm-chair?"

"What is it?" said the Captain to Buttons.

"He wants to know if your Excellency will honor him by sitting near him."

The Captain's eye sparkled. Evidently it met his wishes. The Americans saw his delight.

"I should feel honored by sitting beside the illustrious stranger," said he. "It was what I came to ask. And will you allow the rest of these noble gentlemen to sit here and participate in your amusement?"

"The very thing," said Buttons, "which we have been trying to get them to do, but they won't. Now we are as anxious as ever, but still more anxious for the ladies."

"Oh, the ladies!" said the Captain; "they are timid."

Saying this he made a gesture, and five of his men came up. The whole six then sat with the five Americans. The Senator insisted that the Captain should sit by his side. Yet it was singular. Each one of the men still kept his gun. No notice was taken of this, however. The policy of the Americans was to go in for utter jollity. They sat thus:

The Captain.
The Senator.
Bandit Number 1.
Mr. Figgs.
Bandit Number 2.
The Doctor.
Bandit Number 3.
Dick.
Bandit Number 4.
Buttons.
Bandit Number 5.

Five members of the Club. Six bandits. In addition to these, four others stood armed at the door. The women were at a distance.

But the sequel must be left to another chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAGNIFICENT ATTITUDE OF THE SENATOR; BRILLIANCY OF BUTTONS; AND PLUCK OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CLUB: BY ALL OF WHICH THE GREATEST EFFECTS ARE PRODUCED.

"Boys," said the Senator, assuming a gay tone, "it's evident these rascals have planned this arrangement to attack us; but I've got a plan by which we can turn the tables. Now laugh, all of you." A roar of laughter arose. "I'll tell it in a minute. Whenever I stop, you all laugh, so that they may not think that we are plotting." Another roar of laughter. "Buttons, talk Italian as hard as you can; pretend to translate what I am saying; make up something funny, so as to get them laughing; but take good care to listen to what I say."

"All right," said Buttons.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" said the others.

Now the Senator began to divulge his plan, and Buttons began to talk Italian, pretending to translate what the Senator said. To do this required much quickness, and a vivid imagination, with a sense of the ridiculous, and many other qualities too numerous to mention. Fortunately Buttons had all these, or else the Club would not have acted precisely as it did act; and perhaps it might not have been able to move along in the capacity of a Club any longer, in which case it would, of course, have had no further adventures; and then this history would not have been written; and whether the world would have been better off or worse is more than I can say, I'm sure.

[What the Senator said.]

"Boys, look at these devils, one on each side of us. They have arranged some signal, and when it is given they will spring at us. Look sharp for your lives, and be ready to do what I say. Buttons, listen, and when you don't hear look at me, and I'll repeat it."

[*Club.*—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

"My idea is to turn the tables on these varmints. They put themselves in our power. What they have arranged for themselves will do for us just as well as if we planned it all. In fact, if we had tried we could not have adjusted the present company better."

[*Club.*—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

"Listen now, Buttons. We will arrange a signal, and at a certain word we will fall on our neighbors and do with them as they propose doing with us. But first let us arrange carefully about the signal; for every thing depends on that."

[*Club.*—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

"First, we must keep up our uproar and merriment to as great an extent as we can, but not very long. Let it be wild, mad, boisterous, but short. It will distract these vagabonds, and throw them off their guard. The first thing on the programme, then, is merriment. Laugh as loud and long as you can."

[What Buttons said he said.]

"He says, most noble Captain, and, gentlemen, that he is desperately hungry; that he can't get what he wants to eat. He generally eats dried snakes, and the supply he brought from the Great American desert is exhausted; he wants more, and will have it."

[Sensation among bandits.]

"He says he wouldn't have come out here to-day, but had a little difficulty just before he joined our party. He was landing from the American ship of war, and on stepping on shore a man trod on his foot, whereupon he put him into the water, and held him there till he was drowned."

[Bandits looking more respectfully.]

"It makes him feel amused, he says, when he thinks how odd that guide looked at him when he made him go down into the crater of Vesuvius; gave him five minutes to say his prayers, and then lifted him up in the air and pitched him down to the bottom. He thinks he is falling still."

[Bandits exchange glances.]

"He doesn't know but what he'll have a little trouble about a priest he killed last night. He was in a church, and was walking about whistling, when a priest came up and ordered him out; whereupon he drew his revolver, and put all six of the bullets in the priest's head."

THE BANDITS CAPTURED.

[What the Senator said.]

[*Club.*—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

"The next thing is, to have some singing. They seem to like our glorious national songs. Give them some of them.—Let the first one be 'Old Virginny.'"

[*Club.*—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

[What Buttons said he said.]

[Bandits cross themselves, and look serious.]

"He heard that the priest was not dead. As he always makes sure work, he intends to look in in the morning, and if he's alive, he'll cut his throat, and make all his attendants dance to the tune of 'Old Virginny.'"

Buttons had to work on that word "Old Virginny," for the quick ears of the Italians had caught it. Bandits cross themselves again.

Captain.—"I don't believe a word of it. It's impossible."

Bandit No. 5.—"He looks like it, any way."

In fact, the Senator did look like it. His hair tinged to an unnatural hue by the sulphur of Vesuvius, his square, determined jaw, his heavy, overhanging brow, marked him as one who was capable of any desperate enterprise.

[What the Senator said.]

"Next and last, Dick, you are to sing 'Yankee Doodle.' You know the words 'about 'coming to town riding on a pony.' You know that verse ends with an Italian word. I am particular about this, for you might sing the wrong verse. Do you understand, all of you? If so, wink your eyes twice."

[What Buttons said he said.]

"He says there is no danger for him, however, for foreigners are in terror of the tune of 'Yankee Doodle.' If he were arrested by the Government, the American Admiral would at once send ashore a file of marines with an 'ultimatum,' a 'Columbiad,' a 'spanker boom,' a 'Webster's Unabridged,' and a 'brachycatalectic,' to demand his surrender at the cannon's mouth."

[The Club all winked twice. Then, as usual:

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

[Great sensation among the bandits at the formidable arms of American marines.]

"Look at me. There are six. I will take two; each of you take one—the man on your right, remember. As Dick, in singing, comes to that word, each of you go at your man. Buttons, you hear, of course."

"They think in town that he is the Devil, because he has killed seven men in duels since he came, and has never been wounded. People don't know the great American invention, worn next the skin, which makes the body impervious to bullets."

[*Club.*—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

[*Captain*, sneering.—"I don't believe it."

Bandit No. 3.—"I don't know. They invented the revolver. If I only had one!"]

"Boys, arrange in your minds what to do. Grab the gun, and put your man down backward. I'm almost ashamed of the game, it's so easy. Look at these boobies by me. They are like children. No muscle. The fellows at the end won't dare to shoot for fear of wounding their own men."

"He's made up his mind to go and take part in the war in Lombardy. He will raise a band of Americans, all clothed in the great shot-proof shirt, and armed with revolvers like ours, that shoot twelve times, and have bullets like bomb-shells, that burst inside of a man and blow him to pieces."

Club.—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"]

Captain, coldly.—"That crow didn't blow up."

Buttons.—"Oh yes it did. It was dark, and you didn't notice. Go get it to-morrow, examine it, and you will find traces of the exploded shell."

Bandit No. 4.—"Santa Maria! What lies this giant tells his friends! and they all laugh. They don't believe him."

Bandit No. 1.—"Well, that revolver is enough for me; and they all have them."

The above conversation was all carried on very rapidly, and did not take up much time.

At once the Club proceeded to carry out the Senator's plan. First they talked nonsense, and roared and laughed, and perfected their plan, and thus passed about ten minutes. Then Buttons asked the Italians if they wished more music.

"Answer, gallant Captain of these Kings of the Road. Will you hear our foreign songs?"

"Most gladly," said the gallant Captain. "There will yet be time before we get our supper."

A sinister gleam in his eye as he said this about the supper did not escape the notice of Buttons. Thereupon he handed the guitar to Dick, and the latter began to sing once more the strains of "Ole Virginny." The Italians showed the same delight, and joined in a roaring chorus. Even the men by the door stood yelling or whistling as Dick sang.

Lastly, Dick struck up the final song. The hour had come!

"Yankee Doodle came to town
To buy himself a pony,
Stuck a feather in his hat
And called it—*Maccaroni!*"

As the song began each man had quietly braced himself for one grand effort. At the sound of the last word the effect was tremendous.

The Senator threw his mighty arms round the Captain and the other bandit. They were both small men, as indeed Italians are generally, and beside his colossal frame they were like boys to a grown man. He held them as in a vice, and grasping their hands, twisted them back till their guns fell from their grasp. As he hurled the affrighted ruffians to the floor, the guns crashed on the stone pavement, one of them exploding in its fall. He then by sheer strength jerked the Captain over on his face, and threw the other man on him face downward. This done he sat on them, and turned to see what the others were doing.

Buttons had darted at No. 5 who was on his right, seized his gun and thrown him backward. He was holding him down now while the fellow was roaring for help.

Dick had done about the same thing, but had not yet obtained possession of the gun. He was holding the Doctor's pistol to the bandit's head, and telling him in choice Italian to drop his gun, or he would send him out of the world with twelve bullets.

The Doctor was all right. He was calmly seated on Bandit No. 3, with one hand holding the bandit's gun pointed toward the door, and the other grasping the ruffian's throat in a death-like clutch. The man's face was black, and he did not move.

Mr. Figgs had not been so successful. Being fat, he had not been quick enough. He was

holding the bandit's gun, and aiming blows at his face.

"Doctor," said the Senator, "your man's all right. Give it to Figgs's man."

The Doctor sprang up, seized Figgs's man by the throat, just as he staggered back, and brought him down.

The whole thing had been done in an incredibly short time. The robbers had been taken by complete surprise. In strength they were far inferior to their assailants. Attacked as they were so unexpectedly the success of the Americans was not very wonderful. The uproar was tremendous. The women were most noisy. At first all were paralyzed. Then wild shrieks rang through the hall. They yelled, they shouted, they wrung their hands.

The four bandits at the end of the hall stood for a moment horror-struck. Then they raised their guns. But they dared not fire. They might shoot their own men. Suddenly Dick, who had got the gun which he wished, looked at the door, and seeing the guns levelled he fired the revolver. A loud scream followed. One of the men fell. The women rushed to take care of him. The other three ran off.

"Doctor," said the Senator, "have you a rope? Tie that man's hands behind him."

The Doctor took his handkerchief, twisted it, and tied the man's hands as neatly and as firmly as though they were in handcuffs. He then went to Buttons, got a handkerchief from him, and tied up his man in the same way. Then Dick's man was bound. At that moment a bullet fired through one of the windows grazed the head of Mr. Figgs.

"Dick," said the Senator, "go out and keep guard."

Dick at once obeyed. The women screamed and ran as he came along.

Then the two men whom the Senator had captured were bound. After a while some pieces of rope and leather straps were found by Buttons. With these all the bandits were secured more firmly. The men whom the Senator had captured were almost lifeless from the tremendous weight of his manly form. They made their captives squat down in one corner, while the others possessed themselves of their guns and watched them. The wretches looked frightened out of their wits. They were Neapolitans and peasants, weak, feeble, nerveless.

"It's nothing to boast of," said the Senator, contemptuously, as he looked at the slight figures. "They're a poor lot—small, no muscle, no spirit, no nothing."

The poor wretches now began to whine and cry.

"Oh, Signore," they cried, appealing to Buttons. "Spare our lives!"

At that the whole crowd of women came moaning and screaming.

"Back!" said Buttons.

"Oh, Signori, for the sake of Heaven spare them. Spare our husbands!"

"Back, all of you! We won't hurt any one if you all keep quiet."

The women went sobbing back again. The Doctor then went to look at the wounded man by the door. The fellow was trembling and weeping. All Italians weep easily.

The Doctor examined him and found it was only a flesh wound. The women were full of gratitude as the Doctor bound up his arm after probing the wound, and lifted the man on a rude couch. From time to time Dick would look in at the door to see how things were going on. The field was won.

"Well," said the Senator, "the other three have probably run for it. They may bring others back. At any rate we had better hurry off. We are armed now, and can be safe. But what ought we to do with these fellows?"

"Nothing," said Buttons.

"Nothing?"

"No. They probably belong to the 'Camorra,' a sort of legalized brigandage, and if we had them all put in prison they would be let out the next day."

"Well, I must say I'd rather not. They're a mean lot, but I don't wish them any harm. Suppose we make them take us out to the road within sight of the city, and then let them go?"

"Well."

The others all agreed to this.

"We had better start at once then."

"For my part," said Mr. Figgs, "I think we had much better get something to eat before we go."

"Pooh! We can get a good dinner in Naples. We may have the whole country around us if we wait, and though I don't care for myself, yet I wouldn't like to see one of you fall, boys."

So it was decided to go at once. One man still was senseless. He was left to the care of the women after being resuscitated by the Doctor. The Captain and four bandits were taken away.

"Attend," said Buttons, sternly. "You must show us the nearest way to Naples. If you deceive us you die. If you show us our way we may perhaps let you go."

The women all crowded around their husbands, screaming and yelling. In vain Buttons told them there was no danger. At last he said—

"You come along too, and make them show us the way. You will then return here with them. The sooner the better. Haste!"

The women gladly assented to this.

Accordingly they all started, each one of the Americans carrying a gun in one hand, and holding the arm of a bandit with the other. The women went ahead of their own accord, eager to put an end to their fears by getting rid of such dangerous guests. After a walk of about half an hour they came to the public road which ran near to the sea.

"I thought I smelt the sea-air," said Dick.

They had gone by the other side of Vesuvius.

"This is the road to Naples, Signori," said the women.

"Ah! And you won't feel safe till you get the men away. Very well, you may go. We can probably take care of ourselves now."

The women poured forth a torrent of thanks and blessings. The men were then allowed to go, and instantly vanished into the darkness. At first it was quite dark, but after a while the moon arose and they walked merrily along, though very hungry.

Before they reached their hotel it was about one o'clock. Buttons and Dick stayed there. As they were all sitting over the repast which they forced the landlord to get for them, Dick suddenly struck his hand on the table.

"Sold!" he cried.

"What?"

"They've got our handkerchiefs."

"Handkerchiefs!" cried Mr. Figgs, ruefully, "why, I forgot to get back my purse."

SOLD.

"Your purse! Well, let's go out to-morrow—"

"Pooh! it's no matter. There were only three piastres in it. I keep my circular bill and larger money elsewhere."

"Well, they've made something out of us after all. Three piastres and five handkerchiefs."

The Senator frowned. "I've a precious good mind to go out there to-morrow and make them disgorge," said he. "I'll think it over."

CHAPTER XV.

DOLORES ONCE MORE.—A PLEASANT CONVERSATION.—BUTTONS LEARNS MORE OF HIS YOUNG FRIEND.—AFFECTING FAREWELL.

As the Club intended to leave for Rome almost immediately, the two young men in the Strado di San Bartollo were prepared to settle with their landlord.

When Buttons and Dick packed up their modest valises there was a general excitement in the house; and when they called for their little bill it appeared, and the whole family along with it. The landlord presented it with a neat bow. Behind him stood his wife. On his left the big dragoon. And on his right Dolores.

Such was the position which the enemy took up.

Buttons took up the paper and glanced at it.

"What is this?"

"Your bill."

"My bill?"

"Yes, Signore."

"Yes," repeated Dolores, waving her little hand at Buttons.

Something menacing appeared in the attitude and tone of Dolores. Had she changed? Had she joined the enemy? What did all this mean?

"What did you say you would ask for this room when I came here?" Buttons at length asked.

"I don't recollect naming any price," said the landlord, evasively.

"I recollect," said Dolores, decidedly. "He didn't name any price at all."

"Good Heavens!" cried Buttons, aghast, and totally unprepared for this on the part of Dolores, though nothing on the part of the landlord could have astonished him. In the brief space of three weeks that worthy had been in the habit of telling him on an average about four hundred and seventy-seven downright lies per day.

"You told me," said Buttons, with admirable calmness, "that it would be two piastres a week."

"Two piastres! Two for both of you! Impossible! You might as well say I was insane."

"Two piastres!" echoed Dolores, in indignant tones—"only think! and for this magnificent apartment! the best in the house—elegantly furnished, and two gentlemen! Why, what is this that he means?"

"Et tu Brute!" sighed Buttons.

"Signore!" said Dolores.

"Didn't he, Dick?"

"He did," said Dick; "of course he did."

"Oh, that *womicciuolo* will say any thing," said Dolores, contemptuously snapping her fingers in Dick's face.

"Why, Sinogre. Look you. How is it possible? Think what accommodations! Gaze upon that bed! Gaze upon that furniture! Contemplate that prospect of the busy street!"

"Why, it's the most wretched room in town," cried Buttons. "I've been ashamed to ask my friends here."

"Ah, wretch!" cried Dolores, with flashing eyes. "You well know that you were never so well lodged at home. This miserable! This a room to be ashamed of! Away, American savage! And your friends, who are they? Do you lodge with the lazaroni?"

"You said that you would charge two piastres. I will pay no more; no, not half a carline. How dare you send me a bill for eighteen piastres? I will pay you six piastres for the three weeks. Your bill for eighteen is a cheat. I throw it away. Behold!"

And Buttons, tearing the paper into twenty fragments, scattered them over the floor.

"Ah!" cried Dolores, standing before him, with her arms folded, and her face all aglow with beautiful anger; "you call it a cheat, do you? You would like, would you not, to run off and pay nothing? That is the custom, I suppose, in America. But you can not do that in this honest country."

"Signore, you may tear up fifty bills, but you must pay," said the landlord, politely.

"If you come to travel you should bring money enough to take you along," said Dolores.

"Then I would not have to take lodgings fit only for a Sorrento beggar," said Buttons, somewhat rudely.

"They are too good for an American beggar," rejoined Dolores, taking a step nearer to him, and slapping her little hands together by way of emphasis.

"Is this the maid," thought Buttons, "that hung so tenderly on my arm at the masquerade? the sweet girl who has charmed so many evenings with her innocent mirth? Is this the fair young creature who—"

"Are you going to pay, or do you think you can keep us waiting forever?" cried the fair young creature, impatiently and sharply.

"No more than six piastres," replied Buttons.

"Be reasonable, Signore. Be reasonable," said the landlord, with a conciliatory smile; "and above all, be calm—be calm. Let us have no contention. I feel that these honorable American gentlemen have no wish but to act justly," and he looked benignantly at his family.

"I wish I could feel the same about these Italians," said Buttons.

"You will soon feel that these Italians are determined to have their due," said Dolores.

"They shall have their due and no more."

"Come, Buttons," said Dick, in Italian, "let us leave this old rascal."

"Old rascal?" hissed Dolores, rushing up toward Dick as though she would tear his eyes out, and stamping her little foot. "Old rascal! Ah, piccolo Di-a-vo-lo!"

"Come," said the landlord; "I have affection for you. I wish to satisfy you. I have always tried to satisfy and please you."

"The ungrateful ones!" said Dolores. "Have we not all been as friendly to them as we never were before? And now they try like vipers to sting us."

"Peace, Dolores," said the landlord, majestically. "Let us all be very friendly. Come, good American gentlemen, let us have peace. "What now *will* you pay?"

"Stop!" cried Dolores. "Do you bargain? Why, they will try and make you take a half-

TWO PIASTRES!

carline for the whole three weeks. I am ashamed of you. I will not consent."

"How much will you give?" said the landlord, once more, without heeding his daughter.

"Six piastres," said Buttons.

"Impossible!"

"When I came here I took good care to have it understood. You distinctly said two piastres per week. You may find it very convenient to forget. I find it equally convenient to remember."

"Try—try hard, and perhaps you will remember that we offered to take nothing. Oh yes, nothing—absolutely nothing. Couldn't think of it," said Dolores, with a multitude of ridiculous but extremely pretty gestures, that made the little witch charming even in her rascality.—"Oh yes, nothing"—a shrug of the shoulders—"we felt so honored"—spreading out her hands and bowing.—"A great American!—a noble foreigner!"—folding her arms, and strutting up and down.—"Too much happiness!"—here her voice assumed a tone of most absurd sarcasm.—"We wanted to entertain them all the rest of our lives for nothing"—a ridiculous grimace—"or perhaps your sweet conversation has been sufficient pay—ha?" and she pointed her little rosy taper finger at Buttons as though she would transfix him.

Buttons sighed. "Dolores!" said he, "I always thought *you* were my friend. I didn't think that you would turn against me."

"Ah, infamous one! and foolish too! Did you think that I could ever help you to cheat my poor parents? Was this the reason why

you sought me? Dishonest one! I am only an innocent girl, but I can understand your villainy."

"I think you understand a great many things," said Buttons, mournfully.

"And to think that one would seek my friendship to save his money!"

Buttons turned away. "Suppose I stayed here three weeks longer, how much would you charge?" he asked the landlord.

That worthy opened his eyes. His face brightened.

"Three weeks longer? Ah—I—Well—Perhaps—"

"Stop!" cried Dolores, placing her hand over her father's mouth—"not a word. Don't you understand? He don't want to stay three minutes longer. He wants to get you into a new bargain, and cheat you."

"Ah!" said the landlord, with a knowing wink. "But, my child, you are really too harsh. You must not mind her, gentlemen. She's only a willful young girl—a spoiled child—a spoiled child."

"Her language is a little strong," said Buttons, "but I don't mind what *she* says."

"You may deceive my poor, kind, simple, honest, unsuspecting father," said she, "but you can't deceive me."

"Probably not."

"Buttons, hadn't we better go?" said Dick; "squabbling here won't benefit us."

"Well," said Buttons, slowly, and with a lingering look at Dolores.

But as Dolores saw them stoop to take their valises she sprang to the door-way.

"They're going! They're going!" she cried. "And they will rob us. Stop them."

"Signore," said Buttons, "here are six piastres. I leave them on the table. You will get no more. If you give me any trouble I will summon you before the police for conspiracy against a traveller. You can't cheat me. You need not try."

So saying, he quietly placed the six piastres on the table, and advanced toward the door.

"Signore! Signore!" cried the landlord, and he put himself in his way. At a sign from Dolores the big dragoon came also, and put himself behind her.

"You shall not go," she cried. "You shall never pass through this door till you pay."

"Who is going to stop us?" said Buttons.

"My father, and this brave soldier who is armed," said Dolores, in a voice to which she tried to give a terrific emphasis.

"Then I beg leave to say this much," said Buttons; and he looked with blazing eyes full in the face of the "brave soldier." "I am not a 'brave soldier,' and I am not armed; but my friend and I have paid our bills, and we are going through that door. If you dare to lay so much as the weight of your finger on me I'll show you how a man can use his fists."

Now the Continentals have a great and a wholesome dread of the English fist, and consider the American the same flesh and blood. They believe that "le bogues" is a necessary part of the education of the whole Anglo-Saxon race, careful parents among that people being intent upon three things for their children, to wit:

(1.) To eat *Rosbif* and *Biftek*, but especially the former.

(2.) To use certain profane expressions, by which the Continental can always tell the Anglo-Saxon.

(3.) To STRIKE FROM THE SHOULDER!!!

Consequently, when Buttons, followed by Dick, advanced to the door, the landlord and the "brave soldier" slipped aside, and actually allowed them to pass.

Not so Dolores.

She tried to hound her relatives on; she stormed; she taunted them; she called them cowards; she even went so far as to run after Buttons and seize his valise. Whereupon that young gentleman patiently waited without a word till she let go her hold. He then went on his way.

Arriving at the foot of the stairway he looked back. There was the slender form of the young girl quivering with rage.

"Addio, Dolores!" in the most mournful of voices.

"Scelerato!" was the response, hissed out from the prettiest of lips.

The next morning the Dodge Club left Naples.

THE BRAVE SOLDIER.

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK RELATES A FAMILY LEGEND.

"DICK," said the Senator, as they rolled over the road, "spin a yarn to beguile the time."

Dick looked modest.

The rest added their entreatics.

"Oh, well," said Dick, "since you're so very urgent it would be unbecoming to refuse. A story? Well, what? I will tell you about my maternal grandfather.

"My maternal grandfather, then, was once out in Hong Kong, and had saved up a little money. As the climate did not agree with him he thought he would come home; and at length an American ship touched there, on board of which he went, and he saw a man in the galley; so my grandfather stepped up to him and asked him:

"'Are you the mate?'

"'No. I'm the man that boils the *mate*,' said the other, who was also an Irishman.

"So he had to go to the cabin, where he found the captain and mate writing out clearance papers for the custom-house.

"'Say, captain, will you cross the sea to plow the raging main?' asked my grandfather.

"'Oh, the ship it is ready and the wind is fair to plow the raging main!' said the captain. Of course my grandfather at once paid his fare without asking credit, and the amount was three hundred and twenty-seven dollars thirty-nine cents.

"Well, they set sail, and after going ever so many thousand miles, or hundred—I forget which, but it don't matter—a great storm arose, a typhoon or simoon, perhaps both; and after slowly gathering up its energies for the space of twenty-nine days, seven hours, and twenty-three minutes, without counting the seconds, it burst upon them at exactly forty-two minutes past five, on the sixth day of the week. Need I say that day was Friday? Now my grandfather saw all the time how it was going to end; and while the rest were praying and shrieking he had cut the lashings of the ship's long-boat and stayed there all the time, having put on board the nautical instruments, two or three fish-hooks, a gross of lucifer matches, and a sauce-pan. At last the storm struck the ship, as I have stated, and at the first crack away went the vessel to the bottom, leaving my grandfather floating alone on the surface of the ocean.

"My grandfather navigated the long-boat fifty-two days, three hours, and twenty minutes by the ship's chronometer; caught plenty of fish with his fish-hooks; boiled sea-water in his sauce-pan, and boiled all the salt away, making his fire in the bottom of the boat, which is a very good place, for the fire can't burn through without touching the water, which it can't burn; and finding plenty of fuel in the boat, which he gradually dismantled, taking first the thole-pins, then the seats, then the taffrail, and so on. This sort of thing, though, could not last forever, and at last, just in the nick of time, he came across a dead whale.

"It was floating bottom upward, covered with barnacles of very large size indeed; and where his fins projected there were two little coves, one on each side. Into the one on the lee-side he ran his boat, of which there was nothing left but the stem and stern and two side planks.

"My grandfather looked upon the whale as an island. It was a very nice country to one who had been so long in a boat, though a little monotonous. The first thing that he did was to erect the banner of his country, of which he happened to have a copy on his pocket-handkerchief; which he did by putting it at the end of an oar and sticking it in the ground, or the flesh, whichever you please to call it. He then took an observation, and proceeded to make himself a house, which he did by whittling up the remains of the long-boat, and had enough left to make a table, a chair, and a boot-jack. So here he stayed, quite comfortable, for forty-three days and a half, taking observations all the time with great accuracy; and at the end of that time all his house was gone, for he had to cut it up for fuel to cook his meals, and nothing was left but half of the boot-jack and the oar which served to uphold the banner of his country. At the end of this time a ship came up.

"The men of the ship did not know what on earth to make of this appearance on the water, where the American flag was flying. So they bore straight down toward it.

"'I see a sight across the sea, hi ho cheerly men!' remarked the captain to the mate, in a confidential manner.

"'Methinks it is my own countrie, hi ho cheerly men!' rejoined the other, quietly.

"'It rises grandly o'er the brine, hi ho cheerly men!' said the captain.

"'And bears aloft our own ensign, hi ho cheerly men!' said the mate.

"As the ship came up my grandfather placed both hands to his mouth in the shape of a speaking-trumpet, and cried out: 'Ship ahoy across the wave, with a way-ay-ay-ay-ay! Storm along!'

"To which the captain of the ship responded through his trumpet: 'Tis I, my messmate bold and brave, with a way-ay-ay-ay-ay! Storm along."

"At this my grandfather inquired: 'What vessel are you gliding on? Pray tell to me its name.'

"And the captain replied: 'Our bark it is a whaler bold, and Jones the captain's name.'

"Thereupon the captain came on board the whale, or on shore, whichever you like—I don't know which, nor does it matter—he came, at any rate. My grandfather shook hands with him and asked him to sit down. But the captain declined, saying he preferred standing.

"'Well,' said my grandfather, 'I called on you to see if you would like to buy a whale.'

BUYING A WHALE.

"Wa'al, yes, I don't mind. I'm in that line myself.'

"'What'll you give for it?'

"'What'll you take for it?'

"'What'll you give?'

"'What'll you take?'

"'What'll you give?'

"'What'll you take?'

"'What'll you { give?' give?' / take?' take?' / give?' give?' / take?' take?'

"Twenty-five minutes were taken up in the repetition of this question, for neither wished to commit himself.

"'Have you had any offers for it yet?' asked Captain Jones at last.

"'Wa'al, no; can't say that I have.'

"'I'll give as much as any body.'

"'How much?'

"'What'll you take?'

"'What'll you give?'

"'What'll you take?'

"'What'll you give?'

"'What'll you take?'

"'What'll { give?' give?' / take?' take?' / give?' give?' / take?'

"Then my grandfather, after a long deliberation, took the captain by the arm and led him all around, showing him the country, as one may say, enlarging upon the fine points, and doing as all good traders are bound to do when they find themselves face to face with a customer.

"To which the end was:

"'Wa'al, what'll you take?'

"'What'll you give?'

"'What'll you { give?' give?' / take?' take?' / give?' give?' / take?' take?'

"'Well,' said my grandfather, 'I don't know as I care about trading after all. I think I'll wait till the whaling fleet comes along. I've been waiting for them for some time, and they ought to be here soon.'

"'You're not in the right track,' said Captain Jones.

"'Yes, I am.'

"'Excuse me.'

"'Ex-cuse *me*,' said my grandfather. 'I took an observation just before you came in sight, and I am in lat. 47° 22′ 20″, long. 150° 15′ 55″.'

"Captain Jones's face fell. My grandfather poked him in the ribs and smiled.

"'I'll tell you what I'll do, as I don't care, after all, about waiting here. It's a little damp, and I'm subject to rheumatics. I'll let you have the whole thing if you give me twenty-five per cent, of the oil after it's barreled, barrels and all.'

"The captain thought for a moment.

"'You drive a close bargain.'

"'Of course.'

"'Well, it'll save a voyage, and that's something.'

"'Something! Bless your heart! ain't that every thing?'

"'Well, I'll agree. Come on board, and we'll make out the papers.'

"So my grandfather went on board, and they made out the papers; and the ship hauled up alongside of the whale, and they went to work cutting, and slashing, and hoisting, and burning, and boiling, and at last, after ever so long a time — I don't remember exactly how long — the oil was all secured, and my grandfather, in a few months afterward, when he landed at Nantucket and made inquiries, sold his share of the oil for three thousand nine hundred and fifty-six dollars fifty-six cents, which he at once invested in business in New Bedford, and started off to Pennsylvania to visit his mother. The old lady didn't know him at all, he was so changed by sun, wind, storm, hardship, sickness, fatigue, want, exposure, and other things of that kind. She looked coldly on him.

"'Who are you?'

"'Don't you know?'

"'No.'

"'Think.'

"'*Have you a strawberry on your arm?*'

"'No.'

"'Then—you are—*you are*—YOU ARE—my own—my long-lost son!'

THE LONG-LOST SON.

"And she caught him in her arms.

"Here endeth the first part of my grandfather's adventures, but he had many more, good and bad; for he was a remarkable man, though I say it; and if any of you ever want to hear more about him, which I doubt, all you've got to do is to say so. But perhaps it's just as well to let the old gentleman drop, for his adventures were rather strange; but the narration of them is not very profitable, not that I go in for the utilitarian theory of conversation; but I think, on the whole, that, in story-telling, fiction should be preferred to dull facts like these, and so the next time I tell a story I will make one up."

The Club had listened to the story with the gravity which should be manifested toward one who is relating family matters. At its close the Senator prepared to speak. He cleared his throat:

"Ahem! Gentlemen of the Club! our adventures, thus far, have not been altogether contemptible. We have a President and a Secretary; ought we not also to have a Recording Secretary—a Historian?"

"Ay!" said all, very earnestly.

"Who, then, shall it be?"

All looked at Dick.

"I see there is but one feeling among us all," said the Senator. "Yes, Richard, you are the man. Your gift of language, your fancy, your modesty, your fluency— But I spare you. From this time forth you know your duty."

Overcome by this honor, Dick was compelled to bow his thanks in silence and hide his blushing face.

"And now," said Mr. Figgs, eagerly, "I want to hear *the Higgins Story!*"

The Doctor turned frightfully pale. Dick began to fill his pipe. The Senator looked earnestly out of the window. Buttons looked at the ceiling.

"What's the matter?" said Mr. Figgs.

"What?" asked Buttons.

"The Higgins Story?"

The Doctor started to his feet. His excitement was wonderful. He clenched his fist.

"I'll quit! I'm going back. I'll join you at Rome by another route. I'll—"

"No, you won't!" said Buttons; "for on a journey like this it would be absurd to begin the Higgins Story."

"Pooh!" said Dick, "it would require nineteen days at least to get through the introductory part."

"When, then, can I hear it?" asked Mr. Figgs, in perplexity.

CHAPTER XVII.

NIGHT ON THE ROAD.—THE CLUB ASLEEP.—THEY ENTER ROME. — THOUGHTS ON APPROACHING AND ENTERING "THE ETERNAL CITY."

TO ROME.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LETTER BY DICK, AND CRITICISMS OF HIS FRIENDS.

They took lodgings near the Piazza di Spagna. This is the best part of Rome to live in, which every traveller will acknowledge. Among other advantages, it is perhaps the only clean spot in the Capital of Christendom.

Their lodgings were peculiar. Description is quite unnecessary. They were not discovered without toil, and not secured without warfare. Once in possession they had no reason to complain. True, the conveniences of civilized life do not exist there—but who dreams of convenience in Rome?

On the evening of their arrival they were sitting in the Senator's room, which was used as the general rendezvous. Dick was diligently writing.

"Dick," said the Senator, "what are you about?"

"Well," said Dick, "the fact is, I just happened to remember that when I left home the editor of the village paper wished me to write occasionally. I promised, and he at once published the fact in enormous capitals. I never thought of it till this evening, when I happened to find a scrap of the last issue of his paper in my valise. I recollected my promise, and I thought I might as well drop a line."

"Read what you have written."

Dick blushed and hesitated.

"Nonsense! Go ahead, my boy!" said Buttons.

Whereupon Dick cleared his throat and began:

"Rome, May 30, 1859.

"Mr. Editor.—Rome is a subject which is neither uninteresting nor alien to the present age."

"That's a fact, or you wouldn't be here writing it," remarked Buttons.

"In looking over the past, our view is too often bounded by the Middle Ages. We consider that period as the chaos of the modern world, when it lay covered with darkness, until the Reform came and said, 'Let there be light!'"

"Hang it, Dick! be original or be nothing."

"Yet, if the life of the world began anywhere, it was in Rome. Assyria is nothing to me. Egypt is but a spectacle!"

"If you only had enough funds to carry you there you'd change your tune. But go on."

"But Rome arises before me as the parent of the latter time. By her the old battles between Freedom and Despotism were fought long ago, and the forms and principles of Liberty came forth, to pass, amid many vicissitudes, down to a new-born day."

"There! I'm coming to the point now!"

"About time, I imagine. The editor will get into despair."

"There is but one fitting approach to Rome. By any other road the majesty of the Old Capital is lost in the lesser grandeur of the Medieval City. Whoever goes there let him come up from Naples and enter by the Jerusalem Gate."

"Jerusalem fiddlesticks! Why, there's no such gate!"

"There the very spirit of Antiquity sits enthroned to welcome the traveller, and all the solemn Past sheds her influences over his soul—"

"Excuse me; there is a Jerusalem Gate."

"Perhaps so—in Joppa."

"There the Imperial City lies in the sublimity of ruin. It is the Rome of our dreams—the ghost of a dead and buried Empire hovering over its own neglected grave!"

"Dick, it's not fair to work off an old college essay as European correspondence."

"Nothing may be seen but desolation. The waste Campagna stretches its arid surface away to the Alban mountains, uninhabited, and forsaken of man and beast. For the dust and the works and the monuments of millions lie here, mingled in the common corruption of the tomb, and the life of the present age shrinks away in terror. Long lines of lofty aqueducts come slowly down from the Alban hills, but these crumbled stones and broken arches tell a story more eloquent than human voice.

"The walls arise before us, but there is no city beyond. The desolation that reigns in the Campagna has entered here. The palace of the noble, the haunts of pleasure, the resorts of the multitude, the garrison of the soldier, have crumbled to dust, and mingled together in one common ruin. The soil on which we tread, which gives birth to trees, shrubs, and wild flowers without number, is but an assemblage of the disintegrated atoms of stones and mortar that once arose on high in the form of palace, pyramid, or temple."

"Dick, I advise you to write all your letters before you see the places you speak of. You've no idea how eloquent you can be!"

"Now if we pass on in this direction, we soon come to a spot which is the centre of the world—the place where most of all we must look when we search for the source of much that is valuable in our age.

"It is a rude and a neglected spot. At one end rises a rock crowned with houses; on one side are a few mean edifices, mingled with masses of tottering ruins; on the other a hill formed altogether of crumbled atoms of bricks, mortar, and precious marbles. In the midst are a few rough columns blackened by time and exposure. The soil is deep, and in places there are pits where excavations have been made. Rubbish lies around; bits of straw, and grass, and hay, and decayed leather, and broken bottles, and old bones. A few dirty shepherds pass along, driving lean and miserable sheep. Further up is a cluster of wine-carts, with still more curious horses and drivers.

"What is this place?—what those ruins, these fallen monuments, these hoary arches, these ivy-covered walls? What? This is—

"'The field of freedom, faction, fame, and blood;
Here a proud people's passions were exhaled,
From the first hour of Empire in the bud
To that when further worlds to conquer failed;
The Forum where the Immortal accents glow,
And still the eloquent air breathes, burns with Cicero!'

"Yet if you go up to one of those people and ask this question, he will answer you and tell you the only name he knows—'*The Cow Market!*'"

"Is that all?" inquired Buttons, as Dick laid down his paper.

"That's all I've written as yet."

Whereupon Buttons clapped his hands to express applause, and all the others laughingly followed his example.

"Dick," said the Senator, after a pause, "what you have written sounds pretty. But look at the facts. Here you are writing a description of Rome before you've seen any thing of the place at all. All that you have put in that letter is what you have read in books of travel. I mention this not from blame, but merely to show what a wrong principle travellers go on. They don't notice real live facts. Now I've promised the editor of our paper a letter. As soon as I write it I'll read it for you. The style won't be equal to yours. But, if I write, I'll be bound to tell something new. Sentiment," pursued the Senator, thoughtfully, "is playing the dickens with the present age. What we ought to look at is not old ruins or pictures, but men—men—live men. I'd rather visit the cottage of an Italian peasant than any church in the country. I'd rather see the working of the political constitution of this 'ere benighted land than any painting you can show. Horse-shoes before ancient stones, and macaroni before statues, say I! For these little things show me all the life of the people. If I only understood their cursed lingo," said the Senator, with a tinge of regret, "I'd rather stand and hear them talk by the hour, particularly the women, than listen to the pootiest music they can scare up!"

"I tried that game," said Mr. Figgs, ruefully, "in Naples. I went into a broker's shop to change a Napoleon. I thought I'd like to see their financial system. I saw enough of it; for the scoundrel gave me a lot of little bits of coin that only passed for a few cents apiece in Naples, with difficulty at that, and won't pass here at all!"

The Senator laughed. "Well, you shouldn't complain. You lost your Napoleon, but gained experience. You have a new wrinkle. I gained a new wrinkle too when I gave a half-Napoleon, by mistake, to a wretched looking beggar, blind of one eye. I intended to give him a centime."

"Your principle," said Buttons, "does well enough for you as a traveller. But you don't look at all the points of the subject. The point is to write a letter for a newspaper. Now what is the most successful kind of letter? The readers of a family paper are notoriously women and young men, or lads. Older men only look at the advertisements or the news. What do women and lads care for horse-shoes and macaroni? Of course, if one were to write about these things in a humorous style they would take; but, as a general thing, they prefer to read about old ruins, and statues, and cities, and processions. But the best kind of a correspondence is that which deals altogether in adventures. That's what takes the mind! Incidents of travel, fights with ruffians, quarrels with landlords, shipwrecks, robbery, odd scrapes, laughable scenes; and Dick, my boy! when you write again be sure to fill your letter with events of this sort."

"But suppose," suggested Dick, meekly, "that we meet with no ruffians, and there are no adventures to relate?"

"Then use a traveller's privilege and invent them. What was imagination given for if not to use?"

"It will not do—it will not do," said the Senator, decidedly. "You must hold on to facts. Information, not amusement, should be your aim."

"But information is dull by itself. Amusement perhaps is useless. Now how much better to combine the utility of solid information with the lighter graces of amusement, fun, and fancy. Your pill, Doctor, is hard to take, though its effects are good. Coat it with sugar and it's easy."

"What!" exclaimed the Doctor, suddenly starting up. "I'm not asleep! Did you speak to me?"

The Doctor blinked and rubbed his eyes, and wondered what the company were laughing at. In a few minutes, however, he concluded to resume his broken slumber in his bed. He accordingly retired; and the company followed his example.

CHAPTER XIX.

ST. PETER'S!—THE TRAGIC STORY OF THE FAT MAN IN THE BALL.—HOW ANOTHER TRAGEDY NEARLY HAPPENED.—THE WOES OF MEINHERR SCHATT.

Two stately fountains, a colonnade which in spite of faults possesses unequalled majesty, a vast piazza, enclosing many acres, in whose immense area puny man dwindles to a dwarf, and in the distance the unapproachable glories of the greatest of earthly temples—such is the first view of St. Peter's.

Our party of friends entered the lordly vestibule, and lifting the heavy mat that hung over the door-way they passed through. There came a soft air laden with the odor of incense; and strains of music from one of the side chapels came echoing dreamily down one of the side

aisles. A glare of sunlight flashed in on polished marbles of a thousand colors that covered pillars, walls, and pavement. The vaulted ceiling blazed with gold. People strolled to and fro without any apparent object. They seemed to be promenading. In different places some peasant women were kneeling.

They walked up the nave. The size of the immense edifice increased with every step. Arriving under the dome they stood looking up with boundless astonishment.

They walked round and round. They saw statues which were masterpieces of genius; sculptures that glowed with immortal beauty; pictures which had consumed a life-time as they grew up beneath the patient toil of the mosaic worker. There were altars containing gems equal to a king's ransom; curious pillars that came down from immemorial ages; lamps that burn forever.

"This," said the Senator, "is about the first place that has really come up to my idee of foreign parts. In fact it goes clean beyond it. I acknowledge its superiority to any thing that America can produce. But what's the good of it all? If this Government really cared for the good of the people it would sell out the hull concern, and devote the proceeds to railways and factories. Then Italy would go ahead as Providence intended."

"My dear Sir, the people of this country would rise and annihilate any Government that dared to touch it."

"Shows how debased they have grown. There's no utility in all this. There couldn't be any really good Gospel preaching here.

"Different people require different modes of worship," said Buttons, sententiously.

"But it's immense," said the Senator, as they stood at the furthest end and looked toward the entrance. "I've been calc'latin' that you could range along this middle aisle about eighteen good-sized Protestant churches, and eighteen more along the side aisles. You could pile them up three tiers high. You could stow away twenty-four more in the cross aisle. After that you could pile up twenty more in the dome. That would make room here for one hundred and fifty-two good-sized Protestant churches, and room enough would be left to stow away all their spires."

And to show the truth of his calculation he exhibited a piece of paper on which he had pencilled it all.

If the interior is imposing the ascent to the roof is equally so. There is a winding path so arranged that mules can go up carrying loads. Up this they went and reached the roof. Six or seven acres of territory snatched from the air spread around; statues rose from the edge; all around cupolas and pillars arose. In the centre the huge dome itself towered on high. There was a long low building filled with people who lived up here. They were workmen whose duty it was to attend to the repairs of the vast structure. Two fountains poured forth a never-ceasing supply of water. It was difficult to conceive that this was the roof of a building.

Entering the base of the central cupola a stairway leads up. There is a door which leads to the interior, where one can walk around a gallery on the inside of the dome and look down. Further up where the arch springs there is another. Finally, at the apex of the dome there is a third opening. Looking down through this the sensation is terrific.

Upon the summit of the vast dome stands an edifice of large size, which is called the lantern, and appears insignificant in comparison with the mighty structure beneath. Up this the stairway goes until at length the opening into the ball is reached.

The whole five climbed up into the ball. They found to their surprise that it would hold twice as many more. The Senator reached up his hand. He could not touch the top. They looked through the slits in the side. The view was boundless; the wide Campagna, the purple Apennines, the blue Mediterranean, appeared from different sides.

"I feel," said the Senator, "that the conceit is taken out of me. What is Boston State House to this; or Bunker Hill monument! I used to see pictures of this place in Woodbridge's Geography; but I never had a realizing sense of architecture until now."

"This ball," said Buttons, "has its history, its associations. It has been the scene of suffering. Once a stoutish man came up here. The guides warned him, but to no purpose. He was a willful Englishman. You may see, gentlemen, that the opening is narrow. How the Englishman managed to get up does not appear; but it is certain that when he tried to get down he found it impossible. He tried for hours to squeeze through. No use. Hundreds of people came up to help him. They couldn't. The whole city got into a state of wild excitement. Some of the churches had prayers offered up for him though he was a heretic. At the end of three days he tried again. Fasting and anxiety had come to his relief, and he slipped through without difficulty."

"He must have been a London swell," said Dick.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Mr. Figgs, looking with an expression of horror, first at the opening and then at his own rotundity. Then springing forward he hurriedly began to descend.

Happy Mr. Figgs! There was no danger for him. But in his eagerness to get down he did not think of looking below to see if the way was clear. And so it happened, that as he descended quickly and with excited haste, he stepped with all his weight upon the hand of a man who was coming up. The stranger shouted. Mr. Figgs jumped. His foot slipped. His hand loosened, and down he fell plump to the bottom. Had he fallen on the floor there is no doubt that he would have sustained severe in-

jury. Fortunately for himself he fell upon the stranger and nearly crushed his life out.

The stranger writhed and rolled till he had got rid of his heavy burden. The two men simultaneously started to their feet. The stranger was a short stout man with an unmistakable German face. He had bright blue eyes, red hair, and a forked red beard. He stared with all his might, stroked his forked red beard piteously, and then ejaculated most gutturally, in tones that seemed to come from his boots—

"Gh-h-h-r-r-r-r-r-acious me!"

Mr. Figgs overwhelmed him with apologies, assured him that it was quite unintentional, hoped that he wasn't hurt, begged his pardon; but the stranger only panted, and still he stroked his forked red beard, and still ejaculated—

"Gh-h-h-r-r-r-r-r-acious me!"

Four heads peered through the opening above; but seeing no accident their owners, one by one, descended, and all with much sympathy asked the stranger if he was much hurt. But the stranger, who seemed quite bewildered, still panted and stroked his beard, and ejaculated—

"Gh-h-h-r-r-r-r-r-acious me!"

At length he seemed to recover his faculties, and discovered that he was not hurt. Upon this he assured Mr. Figgs, in heavy guttural English, that it was nothing. He had often been knocked down before. If Mr. Figgs were a Frenchman, he would feel angry. But as he was an American he was proud to make his acquaintance. He himself had once lived in America, in Cincinnati, where he had edited a German paper. His name was Meinherr Schatt.

Meinherr Schatt showed no further disposition to go up; but descended with the others down as far as the roof, when they went to the front and stood looking down on the piazza. In the course of conversation Meinherr Schatt informed them that he belonged to the Duchy of Saxe Meiningen, that he had been living in Rome about two years, and liked it about as well as any place that he had seen. He went every autumn to Paris to speculate on the Bourse, and generally made enough to keep him for a year. He was acquainted with all the artists in Rome. Would they like to be introduced to some of them?

Buttons would be most charmed. He would rather become acquainted with artists than with any class of people.

Meinherr Schatt lamented deeply the present state of things arising from the war in Lombardy. A peaceful German traveller was scarcely safe now. Little boys made faces at him in the street, and shouted after him, "Maledetto Tedescho!"

Just at this moment the eye of Buttons was attracted by a carriage that rolled away from under the front of the cathedral down the piazza. In it were two ladies and a gentleman. Buttons stared eagerly for a few moments, and then gave a jump.

"What's the matter?" cried Dick,

"It is! By Jove! It is!"

"What? Who?"

"I see her face! I'm off!"

"Confound it! Whose face?"

But Buttons gave no answer. He was off like the wind, and before the others could recover from their surprise had vanished down the descent.

"What upon airth has possessed Buttons now?" asked the Senator.

"It must be the Spanish girl," said Dick.

"Again? Hasn't his mad chase at sea given him a lesson? Spanish girl! What is he after? If he wants a girl, why can't he wait and pick out a regular thorough-bred out and outer of Yankee stock? These Spaniards are not the right sort."

In an incredible short space of time the figure of Buttons was seen dashing down the piazza, in the direction which the carriage had taken. But the carriage was far ahead, and even as he left the church it had already crossed the Ponte di S. Angelo. The others then descended. Buttons was not seen till the end of the day.

"GRACIOUS ME!"

He then made his appearance with a dejected air.

"What luck?" asked Dick, as he came in.

"None at all," said Buttons, gloomily.

"Wrong ones again?"

"No, indeed. I'm not mistaken this time. But I couldn't catch them. They got out of sight, and kept out too. I've been to every hotel in the place, but couldn't find them. It's too bad."

"Buttons," said the Senator, gravely, "I'm sorry to see a young man like you so infatuated. Beware—Buttons—beware of wimmin! Take the advice of an older and more experienced man. Beware of wimmin. Whenever you see one coming—dodge! It's your only hope. If it hadn't been for wimmin"—and the Senator seemed to speak half to himself, while his face assumed a pensive air—"if it hadn't been for wimmin, I'd been haranguing the Legislatoor now, instead of wearying my bones in this benighted and enslaved country."

CHAPTER XX.

THE GLORY, GRANDEUR, BEAUTY, AND INFINITE VARIETY OF THE PINCIAN HILL; NARRATED AND DETAILED NOT COLUMNARILY BUT EXHAUSTIVELY, AND AFTER THE MANNER OF RABELAIS.

Oh, the Pincian Hill!—Does the memory of that place affect all alike? Whether it does or not matters little to the chronicler of this veracious history. To him it is the crown and glory of modern Rome; the centre around which all Rome clusters. Delightful walks! Views without a parallel! Place on earth to which no place else can hold a candle!

Pooh—what's the use of talking? Contemplate, O Reader, from the Pincian Hill the following:

The Tiber, The Campagna, The Aqueducts, Trajan's Column, Antonine's Pillar, The Piazza del Popolo, The Torre del Capitoglio, The Hoar Capitoline, The Palatine, The Quirinal, The Viminal, The Esquiline, The Cœlian, The Aventine, The Vatican, The Janiculum, St. Peter's, The Lateran, The Stands for Roast Chestnuts, The New York *Times*, the Hurdy-gurdys, The London *Times*, The Raree-shows, The Obelisk of Mosaic Pharaoh, The Wine-carts, *Harper's Weekly*, Roman Beggars, Cardinals, Monks, Artists, Nuns, The New York *Tribune*, French soldiers, Swiss Guards, Dutchmen, Mosaic-workers, Plane-trees, Cypress-trees, Irishmen, Propaganda Students, Goats, Fleas, Men from Boating, Patent Medicines, Swells, Lager, Meerschaum-pipes, The New York *Herald*, Crosses, Rustic Seats, Dark-eyed Maids, Babel, Terrapins, Marble Pavements, Spiders, Dreamy Haze, Jews, Cossacks, Hens, All the Past, Rags, The original Barrel-organ, The original Organ-grinder, Bourbon Whisky, Civita Vecchia Olives, Hadrian's Mausoleum, *Harper's Magazine*, The Laurel Shade, Murray's Hand-book, Cicerones, Englishmen, Dog-carts, Youth, Hope, Beauty, Conversation Kenge, Blue-bottle Flies, Gnats, *Galignani*, Statues, Peasants, Cockneys, Gas-lamps, Dust-carts, Mechlin-laces, Paper-collars, Pavilions, Mosaic Brooches, Little Dogs, Small Boys, Lizards, Snakes, Golden Sunsets, Turks, Purple Hills, Placards, Shin-plasters, Monkeys, Old Boots, Coffee-roasters, Pale Ale, The Dust of Ages, The Ghost of Rome, Ice Cream, Memories, Soda-Water, Harper's Guide-Book.

CHAPTER XXI.

HARMONY ON THE PINCIAN HILL.—MUSIC HATH CHARMS.—AMERICAN MELODIES.—THE GLORY, THE POWER, AND THE BEAUTY OF YANKEE DOODLE, AND THE MERCENARY SOUL OF AN ITALIAN ORGAN-GRINDER.

The Senator loved the Pincian Hill, for there he saw what he loved best; more than ruins, more than churches, more than pictures and statues, more than music. He saw man and human nature.

He had a smile for all; of superiority for the bloated aristocrat; of friendliness for the humble, yet perchance worthy mendicant. He longed every day more and more to be able to talk the language of the people.

On one occasion the Club was walking on the Pincian Hill, when suddenly they were arrested by familiar sounds which came from some place not very far away. It was a barrel-organ; a soft and musical organ; but it was playing "Sweet Home."

"A Yankee tune," said the Senator. "Let us go and patronize domestic manufacture. That is my idee of political economy."

Reaching the spot they saw a pale, intellectual-looking Italian working away at his instrument.

"It's not bad, though that there may not be the highest kind of musical instrument."

"No," said Buttons; "but I wonder that you, an elder of a church, can stand here and listen to it."

"Why, what has the church to do with a barrel-organ?"

"Don't you believe the Bible?"

"Of course," said the Senator, looking mystified.

"Don't you know what it says on the subject?"

"What the Bible says? Why no, of course not. It says nothing."

"I beg your pardon. It says, 'The sound of the grinding is low.' See Ecclesiastes, twelfth, fourth."

The Senator looked mystified, but said nothing. But suddenly the organ-grinder struck up another tune.

"Well, I do declare," cried the Senator, delighted, "if it isn't another domestic melody!"

It was "Independence Day."

"Why, it warms my heart," he said, as a flush spread over his fine countenance.

The organ-grinder received any quantity of *baiocchi*, which so encouraged him that he tried another—"Old Virginny."

"That's better yet," said the Senator. "But how on airth did this man manage to get hold of these tunes?"

Then came others. They were all American: "Old Folks at Home," "Nelly Bly," "Suwannee Ribber," "Jordan," "Dan Tucker," "Jim Crow."

The Senator was certainly most demonstrative, but all the others were equally affected.

Those native airs; the dashing, the reckless,

the roaringly-humorous, the obstreperously jolly — they show one part of the many-sided American character.

Not yet has justice been done to the nigger song. It is not a nigger song. It is an American melody. Leaving out those which have been stolen from Italian Operas, how many there are which are truly American in their extravagance, their broad humor, their glorious and uproarious jollity! The words are trash. The melodies are every thing.

These melodies touched the hearts of the listeners. American life rose before them as they listened.—American life—free, boundless, exuberant, broadly-developing, self-asserting, gaining its characteristics from the boundless extent of its home—a continental life of limitless variety. As mournful as the Scotch; as reckless as the Irish; as solemnly patriotic as the English.

OLD VIRGINNY.

"Listen!" cried the Senator, in wild excitement.

It was "Hail Columbia."

"The Pincian Hill," said the Senator, with deep solemnity, "is glorified from this time forth and for evermore. It has gained a new charm. The Voice of Freedom hath made itself heard!"

The others, though less demonstrative, were no less delighted. Then came another, better yet. "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"There!" cried the Senator, "is our true national anthem—the commemoration of national triumph; the grand upsoaring of the victorious American Eagle as it wings its everlasting flight through the blue empyrean away up to the eternal stars!"

He burst into tears; the others respected his emotion.

Then he wiped his eyes and looked ashamed of himself—quite uselessly—for it is a mistake to suppose that tears are unmanly. Unmanly! The manliest of men may sometimes shed tears out of his very manhood.

At last there arose a magic strain that produced an effect to which the former was nothing. It was "Yankee Doodle!"

The Senator did not speak. He could not find words. He turned his eyes first upon one, and then another of his companions; eyes beaming with joy and triumph — eyes that showed emotion arising straight from a patriot's heart —eyes which seemed to say: Is there any sound on earth or above the earth that can equal this?

Yankee Doodle has never received justice. It is a tune without words. What are the recognized words? Nonsense unutterable — the sneer of a British officer. But the tune!—ah, that is quite another thing!

The tune was from the very first taken to the national heart, and has never ceased to be cherished there. The Republic has grown to be a very different thing from that weak beginning, but its national air is as popular as ever. The people do not merely love it. They glory in it. And yet apologies are sometimes made for it. By whom? By the soulless dilettante. The people know better:—the farmers, the mechanics, the fishermen, the dry-goods clerks, the newsboys, the railway stokers, the butchers, the bakers, the candlestick-makers, the tinkers, the tailors, the soldiers, the sailors. Why? Because this music has a voice of its own, more expressive than words; the language of the soul, which speaks forth in certain melodies which form an utterance of unutterable passion.

The name was perhaps given in ridicule. It was accepted with pride. The air is rash, reckless, gay, triumphant, noisy, boisterous, careless, heedless, rampant, raging, roaring, rattle-brainish, devil-may-care-ish, plague-take-the-hindmost-ish; but! solemn, stern, hopeful, resolute, fierce, menacing, strong, cantankerous (cantankerous is entirely an American idea), bold, daring—

Words fail.

Yankee Doodle has not yet received its Doo!

The Senator had smiled, laughed, sighed, wept, gone through many variations of feeling.

He had thrown *baiocchi* till his pockets were exhausted, and then handed forth silver. He had shaken hands with all his companions ten times over. They themselves went not quite as far in feeling as he, but yet to a certain extent they went in.

And yet Americans are thought to be practical, and not ideal. Yet here was a true American who was intoxicated—drunk! By what? By sound, notes, harmony. By music!

"Buttons," said he, as the music ceased and the Italian prepared to make his bow and quit the scene, "I must make that gentleman's acquaintance."

Buttons walked up to the organ-grinder.

"Be my interpreter," said the Senator. "Introduce me."

"What's your name?" asked Buttons.

"Maffeo Cloto."

"From where?"

"Urbino."

"Were you ever in America?"

"No, Signore."

"What does he say?" asked the Senator, impatiently.

"He says his name is Mr. Cloto, and he was never in America."

"How did you get these tunes?"

"Out of my organ," said the Italian, grinning.

"Of course; but how did you happen to get an organ with such tunes?"

"I bought it."

"Oh yes; but how did you happen to buy one with these tunes?"

"For you illustrious American Signore. You all like to hear them."

"Do you know any thing about the tunes?"

"Signore?"

"Do you know what the words are?"

"Oh no. I am an Italian."

"I suppose you make money out of them."

"I make more in a day with these than I make in a week with other tunes."

"You lay up money, I suppose."

"Oh yes. In two years I will retire and let my younger brother play here."

"These tunes?"

"Yes, Signore."

"To Americans?"

"Yes, Signore."

"What is it all?" asked the Senator.

"He says that he finds he makes money by playing American tunes to Americans."

"Hm," said the Senator, with some displeasure; "and he has no soul then to see the—the beauty, the sentiment, the grandeur of his vocation!"

"Not a bit—he only goes in for money."

The Senator turned away in disgust. "Yankee Doodle," he murmured, "ought of itself to have a refining and converting influence on the European mind; but it is too debased—yes—yes—too debased."

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW A BARGAIN IS MADE.—THE WILES OF THE ITALIAN TRADESMAN.—THE NAKED SULKY BEGGAR, AND THE JOVIAL WELL-CLAD BEGGAR.—WHO IS THE KING OF BEGGARS?

"What are you thinking about, Buttons?"

"Well, Dick, to tell the truth, I have been thinking that if I do find the Spaniards they won't have reason to be particularly proud of me as a companion. Look at me."

"I look, and to be frank, my dear boy, I must say that you look more shabby-genteel than otherwise."

"That's the result of travelling on one suit of clothes—without considering fighting. I give up my theory."

"Give it up, then, and come out as a butterfly."

"Friend of my soul, the die is cast. Come forth with me and seek a clothing-store."

It was not difficult to find one. They entered the first one that they saw. The polite Roman overwhelmed them with attention.

"Show me a coat, Signore."

Signore sprang nimbly at the shelves and brought down every coat in his store. Buttons picked out one that suited his fancy, and tried it on.

"What is the price?"

With a profusion of explanation and description the Roman informed him: "Forty piastres."

"I'll give you twelve," said Buttons, quietly.

The Italian smiled, put his head on one side, drew down the corners of his mouth, and threw up his shoulders. This is the *shrug*. The shrug requires special attention. The shrug is a gesture used by the Latin race for expressing a multitude of things, both objectively and subjectively. It is a language of itself. It is, as circumstances require, a noun, adverb, pronoun, verb, adjective, preposition, interjection, conjunction. Yet it does not supersede the spoken language. It comes in rather when spoken words are useless, to convey intensity of meaning or delicacy. It is not taught, but it is learned.

The coarser, or at least blunter, Teutonic race have not cordially adopted this mode of human intercommunication. The advantage of the shrug is that in one slight gesture it contains an amount of meaning which otherwise would require many words. A good shrugger in Italy is admired, just as a good conversationist is in England, or a good stump orator in America. When the merchant shrugged, Buttons understood him and said:

"You refuse? Then I go. Behold me!"

"Ah, Signore, how can you thus endeavor to take advantage of the necessities of the poor?"

"Signore, I must buy according to my ability."

The Italian laughed long and quietly. The idea of an Englishman or American not having much money was an exquisite piece of humor.

"Go not, Signore. Wait a little. Let me

unfold more gar
You shall have
piastres."
"No, Signore
have none."
"You are very
necessities. Thi
ent war, which
feel most of all."
"Then addio,
They went out
"P-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-
of the Latin race.
ing sound than a
it. Children too
porting to Ameri
"P-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-
Buttons and Di
smiling and bowi
"Take it for t
"No, Signore
With a gesture
keeper withdrew.
They had scarcel
shop-keeper was a
"A thousand pe
to take twenty."
"No; twelve,
"But think, Si
"I do think, m
"Say eighteen.
"No, Signore."
"Seventeen."
"Twelve."
"Here. Come

THE SHRUG.

anfold more garments. Behold this, and this. You shall have many of my goods for twelve piastres."

"No, Signore; I must have this, or I will have none."

"You are very hard, Signore. Think of my necessities. Think of the pressure of this present war, which we poor miserable tradesmen feel most of all."

"Then addio, Signore; I must depart."

They went out and walked six paces.

"P-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-t!" (Another little idea of the Latin race. It is a much more penetrating sound than a loud Hallo! Ladies can use it. Children too. This would be worth importing to America.)

"P-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-t!"

Buttons and Dick turned. The Italian stood smiling and bowing and beckoning.

"Take it for twenty-four piastres."

"No, Signore; I can only pay twelve."

With a gesture of ruffled dignity the shopkeeper withdrew. Again they turned away. They had scarcely gone ten paces before the shop-keeper was after them:

"A thousand pardons. But I have concluded to take twenty."

"No; twelve, and no more."

"But think, Signore; only think."

"I do think, my friend; I do think."

"Say eighteen."

"No, Signore."

"Seventeen."

"Twelve."

"Here. Come back with me."

They obeyed. The Italian folded the coat neatly, tied it carefully, stroked the parcel tenderly, and with a meek yet sad smile handed it to Buttons.

"There—only sixteen piastres."

Buttons had taken out his purse. At this he hurriedly replaced it, with an air of vexation.

"I can only give twelve."

"Oh, Signore, be generous. Think of my struggles, my expenses, my family. You will not force me to lose."

"I would scorn to force you to any thing, and therefore I will depart."

"Stop, Signore," cried the Italian, detaining them at the door. "I consent. You may take it for fourteen."

"For Heaven's sake, Buttons, take it," said Dick, whose patience was now completely exhausted. "Take it."

"Twelve," said Buttons.

"Let me pay the extra two dollars, for my own peace of mind," said Dick.

"Nonsense, Dick. It's the principle of the thing. As a member of the Dodge Club, too, I could not give more."

"Thirteen, good Signore mine," said the Italian piteously.

"My friend, I have given my word that I would pay only twelve."

"Your word? Your pardon, but to whom?"

"To you."

"Oh, then, how gladly I release you from your word!"

"Twelve, Signore, or I go."

"I can not."

Buttons turned away. They walked along the street, and at length arrived at another clothier's. Just as they stepped in a hand was laid on Buttons's shoulder, and a voice cried out—

"Take it! Take it, Signore!"

"Ah! I thought so! Twelve?"

"Twelve."

Buttons paid the money and directed where it should be sent. He found out afterward that the price which an Italian gentleman would pay was about ten piastres.

There is no greater wonder than the patient waiting of an Italian tradesman in pursuit of a bargain. The flexibility of the Italian conscience and imagination under such circumstances is truly astonishing.

Dress makes a difference. The very expression of the face changes when one has passed from shabbiness into elegance. After Buttons had dressed himself in his gay attire his next thought was what to do with his old clothes.

"Come and let us dispose of them."

"Dispose of them!"

"Oh, I mean get rid of them. I saw a man crouching in a corner nearly naked as I came up. Let us go and see if we can find him. I'd like to try the effect."

They went to the place where the man had been seen. He was there still. A young man, in excellent health, brown, muscular, lithe. He

had an old coverlet around his loins—that was all. He looked up sulkily.

"Are you not cold?"

"No," he blurted out, and turned away.

"A boor," said Dick. "Don't throw away your charity on him."

"Look here."

The man looked up lazily.

"Do you want some clothes?"

No reply.

"I've got some here, and perhaps will give them to you."

The man scrambled to his feet.

"Confound the fellow!" said Dick. "If he don't want them let's find some one who does."

"Look here," said Buttons.

He unfolded his parcel. The fellow looked indifferently at the things.

"Here, take this," and he offered the pantaloons.

The Italian took them and slowly put them on. This done, he stretched himself and yawned.

"Take this."

It was his vest.

The man took the vest and put it on with equal *sang froid*. Again he yawned and stretched himself.

"Here's a coat."

Buttons held it out to the Italian. The fellow took it, surveyed it closely, felt in the pockets, and examined very critically the stiffening of the collar. Finally he put it on. He buttoned it closely around him, and passed his fingers through his matted hair. Then he felt the pockets once more. After which he yawned long and solemnly. This done, he looked earnestly at Buttons and Dick. He saw that they had nothing more. Upon which he turned on his heel, and without saying a word, good or bad, walked off with immense strides, turned a corner, and was out of sight. The two philanthropists were left staring at one another. At last they laughed.

"That man is an original," said Dick.

"Yes, and there is another," said Buttons.

As he spoke he pointed to the flight of stone steps that goes up from the Piazza di Spagna. Dick looked up. There sat The Beggar!

ANTONIO!

Legless, hatless, but not by any means penniless, king of Roman beggars, with a European reputation, unequalled in his own profession—there sat the most scientific beggar that the world has ever seen.

He had watched the recent proceedings, and caught the glance of the young men.

As they looked up his voice came clear and sonorous through the air:

"O most generous—O most noble—O most illustrious youths—Draw near—Look in pity upon the abject—Behold legless, armless, helpless, the beggar Antonio forsaken of Heaven—For the love of the Virgin—For the sake of the saints—In the name of humanity—Date me uno mezzo baiocco—Sono poooooooooovero—Miserasasasasasabile—Desperrrrasasasasado!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MANIFOLD LIFE OF THE CAFE NUOVO, AND HOW THEY RECEIVED THE NEWS ABOUT MAGENTA.—EXCITEMENT.—ENTHUSIASM.—TEARS.—EMBRACES.

ALL modern Rome lives in the Café Nuovo. It was once a palace. Lofty ceilings, glittering walls, marble pavements, countless tables, luxurious couches, immense mirrors, all dazzle the eye. The hubbub is immense, the confusion overpowering.

The European mode of life is not bad. Lodgings in roomy apartments, where one sleeps and attends to one's private affairs; meals altogether at the café. There one invites one's friends. No delay with dinner; no badly-cooked dishes; no stale or sour bread; no timid, overworn wife trembling for the result of new experiments in housekeeping. On the contrary, one has: prompt meals; exquisite food; delicious bread; polite waiters; and happy wife, with plenty of leisure at home to improve mind and adorn body.

The first visit which the Club paid to the Café Nuovo was an eventful one. News had just been received of the great strife at Magenta. Every one was wild. The two *Galignani's* had been appropriated by two Italians, who were surrounded by forty-seven frenzied Englishmen, all eager to get hold of the papers. The Italians obligingly tried to read the news. The wretched mangle which they made of the language, the impatience, the excitement, and the perplexity of the audience, combined with the splendid self-complacency of the readers, formed a striking scene.

The Italians gathered in a vast crowd in one of the billiard-rooms, where one of their number, mounted on a table, was reading with terrific volubility, and still more terrific gesticulations, a private letter from a friend at Milan.

"Bravo!" cried all present.

In pronouncing which word the Italians rolled the "r" so tumultuously that the only audible sound was—

B-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-r-ah!

Like the letter B in a railway train.

The best of all was to see the French. They were packed in a dense mass at the furthest extremity of the Grand Saloon. Every one was talking. Every one was describing to his neighbor the minute particulars of the tremendous contest. Old soldiers, hoarse with excitement, emulated the volubility of younger ones. A thousand arms waved energetically in the air. Every one was too much interested in his own description to heed his neighbor. They were all talkers, no listeners.

A few Germans were there, but they sat forsaken and neglected. Even the waiters forsook them. So they smoked the cigars of sweet and bitter fancy, occasionally conversing in thick gutturals. It was evident that they considered the present occasion as a combined crow of the whole Latin race over the German. So they looked on with impassive faces.

NEWS OF MAGENTA!

Perhaps the most stolid of all was Meinheer Schatt, who smoked and sipped coffee alternately, stopping after each sip to look around with mild surprise, to stroke his forked beard, and to ejaculate—

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r-acious me!"

Him the Senator saw and accosted, who, making room for the Senator, conversed with much animation. After a time the others took seats near them, and formed a neutral party. At this moment a small-sized gentleman with black twinkling eyes came rushing past, and burst into the thick of the crowd of Frenchmen. At the sight of him Buttons leaped up, and cried:

"There's Francia! I'll catch him now!"

Francia shouted a few words which set the Frenchmen wild.

"The Allies have entered Milan! A dispatch has just arrived!"

There burst a shrill yell of triumph from the insane Frenchmen. There was a wild rushing to and fro, and the crowd swayed backward and forward. The Italians came pouring in from the other room. One word was sufficient to tell them all. It was a great sight to see. On each individual the news produced a different effect. Some stood still as though petrified; others flung up their arms and yelled; others cheered; others upset tables, not knowing what they were doing; others threw themselves into one another's arms, and embraced and kissed; others wept for joy:—these last were Milanese.

Buttons was trying to find Francia. The rush of the excited crowd bore him away, and his efforts were fruitless. In fact, when he arrived at the place where that gentleman had been, he was gone. The Germans began to look more uncomfortable than ever. At length Meinheer Schatt proposed that they should all go in a body to the Café Scacchi. So they all left.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHECKMATE!

The Café Scacchi, as its name implies, is devoted to chess. Germans patronize it to a great extent. Politics do not enter into the precincts sacred to Caissa.

After they had been seated about an hour Buttons entered. He had not been able to find Francia. To divert his melancholy he proposed that Meinheer Schatt should play a game of chess with the Senator. Now, chess was the Senator's hobby. He claimed to be the best player in his State. With a patronizing smile he consented to play with a tyro like Meinheer Schatt. At the end of one game Meinheer Schatt stroked his beard and meekly said—

"Gr-r-r-acious me!"

The Senator frowned and bit his lips. He was checkmated.

Another game. Meinheer Schatt played in a calm, and some might say a stupid, manner.

"Gr-r-r-acious me!"

It was a drawn game.

Another: this was a very long game. The Senator played laboriously. It was no use. Slowly and steadily Meinheer Schatt won the game.

When he uttered his usual exclamation the Senator felt strongly inclined to throw the board at his head. However, he restrained himself, and they commenced another game. Much to his delight the Senator beat. He now began to explain to Buttons exactly why it was that he had not beaten before.

Another game followed. The Senator lost woefully. His defeat was in fact disgraceful. When Meinheer Schatt said the ominous word the Senator rose, and was so overcome with vexation that he had not the courtesy to say—Good-night.

As they passed out Meinheer Schatt was seen staring after them with his large blue eyes, stroking his beard, and whispering to himself—

"Gr-r-r-acious me!"

CHAPTER XXV.

BUTTONS A MAN OF ONE IDEA.—DICK AND HIS MEASURING TAPE.—DARK EYES.—SUSCEPTIBLE HEART.—YOUNG MAIDEN WHO LIVES OUT OF TOWN.—GRAND COLLISION OF TWO ABSTRACTED LOVERS IN THE PUBLIC STREETS.

Too much blame can not be given to Buttons for his behavior at this period. He acted as though the whole motive of his existence was to find the Francias. To this he devoted his days, and of this he dreamed at night. He deserted his friends. Left to themselves, without his moral influence to keep them together and give aim to their efforts, each one followed his own inclination.

Mr. Figgs spent the whole of his time in the Café Nuovo, drawing out plans of dinners for each successive day. The Doctor, after sleeping till noon, lounged on the Pincian Hill till evening, when he joined Mr. Figgs at dinner. The Senator explored every nook and corner of Rome. At first Dick accompanied him, but gradually they diverged from one another in different paths. The Senator visited every place in the city, peered into dirty houses, examined pavements, investigated fountains, stared hard at the beggars, and looked curiously at the Swiss Guard in the Pope's Palace. He soon became known to the lower classes, who recognized with a grin the tall foreigner that shouted queer foreign words and made funny gestures.

Dick lived among churches, palaces, and ruins. Tired at length of wandering, he attached himself to some artists, in whose studios he passed the greater part of his afternoons. He became personally acquainted with nearly every member of the fraternity, to whom he endeared himself by the excellence of his tobacco, and his great capacity for listening. Your talkative people bore artists more than any others.

"What a lovely girl! What a look she gave!"

Such was the thought that burst upon the soul of Dick, after a little visit to a little church

BEFORE AND AFTER.

that goes by the name of Saint Somebody *ai quattri fontani*. He had visited it simply because he had heard that its dimensions exactly correspond with those of each of the chief piers that support the dome of Saint Peter's. As he wished to be accurate, he had taken a tape-line, and began stretching it from the altar to the door. The astonished priests at first stood paralyzed by his sacrilegious impudence, but finally, after a consultation, they came to him and ordered him to be gone. Dick looked up with mild wonder. They indignantly repeated the order.

Dick was extremely sorry that he had given offense. Wouldn't they overlook it? He was a stranger, and did not know that they would be unwilling. However, since he had begun, he supposed they would kindly permit him to finish.

—"They would kindly do no such thing," remarked one of the priests, brusquely. "Was their church a common stable or a wine-shop that he should presume to molest them at their services? If he had no religion, could he not have courtesy; or, if he had no faith himself, could he not respect the faith of others?"

Dick felt abashed. The eyes of all the worshipers were on him, and it was while rolling up his tape that his eyes met the glance of a beautiful Italian girl, who was kneeling opposite. The noise had disturbed her devotions, and she had turned to see what it was. It was a thrilling glance from deep black lustrous orbs, in which there was a soft and melting languor which he could not resist. He went out dazzled, and so completely bewildered that he did not think of waiting. After he had gone a few blocks he hurried back. She had gone. However, the impression of her face remained.

He went so often to the little church that the priests noticed him; but finding that he was quiet and orderly they were not offended. One of them seemed to think that his rebuke had awakened the young foreigner to a sense of higher things; so he one day accosted him with much politeness. The priest delicately brought forward the claims of religion. Dick listened meekly. At length he asked the priest if he recollected a certain young girl with beautiful face, wonderful eyes, and marvellous appearance that was worshiping there on the day that he came to measure the church.

"Yes," said the priest, coldly.

Could he tell her name and where she lived?

"Sir," said the priest, "I had hoped that you came here from a higher motive. It will do you no good to know, and I therefore decline telling you."

Dick begged most humbly, but the priest was inexorable. At last Dick remembered having heard that an Italian was constitutionally unable to resist a bribe. He thought he might try. True, the priest was a gentleman; but perhaps an Italian gentleman was different from an English or American; so he put his hand in his pocket, and blushing violently, brought forth a gold piece of about twenty dollars value. He held it out. The priest stared at him with a look that was appalling.

"If you know—" faltered Dick—"any one—of course I don't mean yourself—far from it—but—that is—"

"Sir," cried the priest, "who are you? Are there no bounds to your impudence? Have you come to insult me because I am a priest, and therefore can not revenge myself? Away!"

The priest choked with rage. Dick walked out. Bitterly he cursed his wretched stupidity that had led him to this. His very ears tingled with shame as he saw the full extent of the insult that he had offered to a priest and a gentleman. He concluded to leave Rome at once.

But at the very moment when he had made this desperate resolve he saw some one coming. A sharp thrill went through his heart.

It was SHE! She looked at him and glanced modestly away. Dick at once walked up to her.

"Signorina," said he, not thinking what a serious thing it was to address an Italian maiden in the streets. But this one did not resent it. She looked up and smiled. "What a smile!" thought Dick.

"Signorina," he said again, and then stopped, not knowing what to say. His voice was very tremulous, and the expression of his face tender and beseeching. His eyes told all.

"Signore," said the girl, with a sweet smile. The smile encouraged Dick.

"Ehem—I have lost my way. I—I—could you tell me how I could get to the Piazza del Popolo? I think I might find my way home from there."

The girl's eyes beamed with a mischievous light.

"Oh yes, most easily. You go down that street; when you pass four side-streets you turn to the left—the left—remember, and then you keep on till you come to a large church with a fountain before it, then you turn round that, and you see the obelisk of the Piazza del Popolo."

Her voice was the sweetest that Dick had ever heard. He listened as he would listen to music, and did not hear a single word that he comprehended.

"Pardon me," said he, "but would you please to tell me again. I can not remember all. Three streets?"

The girl laughed and repeated it.

Dick sighed.

"I'm a stranger here, and am afraid that I can not find my way. I left my map at home. If I could find some one who would go with me and show me."

He looked earnestly at her, but she modestly made a movement to go.

"Are you in a great hurry?" said he.

"No, Signore," replied the girl, softly.

"Could you—a—a—would you be willing—to—to—walk a little part of the way with me, and—show me a very little part of the way—only a very little?"

AWAY!

The girl seemed half to consent, but modestly hesitated, and a faint flush stole over her face.

"Ah do!" said Dick. He was desperate.

"It's my only chance," thought he.

The girl softly assented and walked on with him.

"I am very much obliged to you for your kindness," said Dick. "It's very hard for a stranger to find his way in Rome."

"But, Signore, by this time you ought to know the whole of our city."

"What? How?"

"Why, you have been here three weeks at least."

"How do you know?" and the young man blushed to his eyes. He had been telling lies, and she knew it all the time.

"Oh, I saw you once in the church, and I have seen you with that tall man. Is he your father?"

"No, only a friend."

"I saw you," and she shook her little head triumphantly, and her eyes beamed with fun and laughter.

"Any way," thought Dick, "she ought to understand."

"And did you see me when I was in that little church with a measuring line?"

The young girl looked up at him, her large eyes reading his very soul.

"Did I look at you? Why, I was praying."

"You looked at me, and I have never forgotten it."

Another glance as though to assure herself of Dick's meaning. The next moment her eyes sank and her face flushed crimson. Dick's heart beat so fast that he could not speak for some time.

"Signore," said the young girl at last, "when you turn that corner you will see the Piazza del Popolo."

"Will you not walk as far as that corner?" said Dick.

"Ah, Signore, I am afraid I will not have time."

"Will I never see you again?" asked he, mournfully.

"I do not know, Signore. You ought to know."

A pause. Both had stopped, and Dick was looking earnestly at her, but she was looking at the ground.

"How can I know when I do not know even your name? Let me know that, so that I may think about it."

"Ah, how you try to flatter! My name is Pepita Gianti."

"And do you live far from here?"

"Yes. I live close by the Basilica di San Paolo fuori le mure."

"A long distance. I was out there once."

"I saw you."

Dick exulted.

"How many times have you seen me? I have only seen you once before."

"Oh, seven or eight times."

"And will this be the last?" said Dick, beseechingly.

"Signore, if I wait any longer the gates will be shut."

"Oh, then, before you go, tell me where I can find you to-morrow. If I walk out on that road will I see you? Will you come in to-morrow? or will you stay out there and shall I go there? Which of the houses do you live in? or where can I find you? If you lived over on the Alban Hills I would walk every day to find you."

Dick spoke with ardor and impetuosity. The deep feeling which he showed, and the mingled eagerness and delicacy which he exhibited, seemed not offensive to his companion. She looked up timidly.

"When to-morrow comes you will be thinking of something else—or perhaps away on those Alban mountains. You will forget all about me. What is the use of telling you? I ought to go now."

"I'll never forget!" burst forth Dick. "Never—never. Believe me. On my soul; and oh, Signorina, it is not much to ask!"

PEPITA.

His ardor carried him away. In the broad street he actually made a gesture as though he would take her hand. The young girl drew back blushing deeply. She looked at him with a reproachful glance.

"You forget—"

Whereupon Dick interrupted her with innumerable apologies.

"You do not deserve forgiveness. But I will forgive you if you leave me now. Did I not tell you that I was in a hurry?"

"Will you not tell me where I can see you again?"

"I suppose I will be walking out about this time to-morrow."

"Oh, Signorina! and I will be at the gate."

"If you don't forget."

"Would you be angry if you saw me at the gate this evening?"

"Yes; for friends are going out with me. Addio, Signore."

The young girl departed, leaving Dick rooted to the spot. After a while he went on to the Piazza del Popolo. A thousand feelings agitated him. Joy, triumph, perfect bliss, were mingled with countless tender recollections of the glance, the smile, the tone, and the blushes of Pepita. He walked on with new life. So abstracted was his mind in all kinds of delicious anticipations that he ran full against a man who was hurrying at full speed and in equal abstraction in the opposite direction. There was a recoil. Both fell. Both began to make apologies. But suddenly:

"Why, Buttons!"

"Why, Dick!"

"Where in the world did you come from?"

"Where in the world did you come from?"

"What are you after, Buttons?"

"Did you see a carriage passing beyond that corner?"

"No, none."

"You must have seen it."

"Well, I didn't."

"Why, it must have just passed you."

"I saw none."

"Confound it!"

Buttons hurriedly left, and ran all the way to the corner, round which he passed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONSEQUENCES OF BEING GALLANT IN ITALY, WHERE THERE ARE LOVERS, HUSBANDS, BROTHERS, FATHERS, COUSINS, AND INNUMERABLE OTHER RELATIVES AND CONNECTIONS, ALL READY WITH THE STILETTO.

After his meeting with Pepita, Dick found it extremely difficult to restrain his impatience until the following evening. He was at the gate long before the time, waiting with trembling eagerness.

It was nearly sundown before she came; but she did come at last. Dick watched her with strange emotions, murmuring to himself all those peculiar epithets which are commonly used by people in his situation. The young girl was unmistakably lovely, and her grace and beauty might have affected a sterner heart than Dick's.

"Now I wonder if she knows how perfectly and radiantly lovely she is," thought he, as she looked at him and smiled.

He joined her a little way from the gate.

"So you do not forget."

"*I* forget! Before I spoke to you I thought of you without ceasing, and now I can never forget you."

"Do your friends know where you are?" she asked, timidly.

"Do you think I would tell them?"

"Are you going to stay long in Rome?"

"I will not go away for a long time."

"You are an American."

"Yes."

"America is very far away."

"But it is easy to get there."

"How long will you be in Rome?"

"I don't know. A very long time."

"Not in the summer?"

"Yes, in the summer."

"But the malaria. Are you not afraid of that? Will your friends stay?"

"I do not care whether my friends do or not."

"But you will be left alone."

"I suppose so."

"But what will you do for company? It will be very lonely."

"I will think of you all day, and at evening come to the gate."

"Oh, Signore! You jest now!"

"How can I jest with you?"

"You don't mean what you say."

"Pepita!"

Pepita blushed and looked embarrassed. Dick had called her by her Christian name; but she did not appear to resent it.

"You don't know who I am," she said at last. "Why do you pretend to be so friendly?"

"I know that you are Pepita, and I don't

want to know any thing more, except one thing, which I am afraid to ask."

Pepita quickened her pace.

"Do not walk so fast, Pepita," said Dick, beseechingly. "Let the walk be as long as you can."

"But if I walked so slowly you would never let me get home."

"I wish I could make the walk so slow that we could spend a life-time on the road."

Pepita laughed. "That would be a long time."

It was getting late. The sun was half-way below the horizon. The sky was flaming with golden light, which glanced dreamily through the hazy atmosphere. Every thing was toned down to soft beauty. Of course it was the season for lovers and lovers' vows. Pepita walked a little more slowly to oblige Dick. She uttered an occasional murmur at their slow progress, but still did not seem eager to quicken her pace. Every step was taken unwillingly by Dick, who wanted to prolong the happy time.

Pepita's voice was the sweetest in the world, and her soft Italian sounded more musically than that language had ever sounded before. She seemed happy, and by many little signs showed that her companion was not indifferent to her. At length Dick ventured to offer his arm. She rested her hand on it very gently, and Dick tremulously took it in his. The little hand fluttered for a few minutes, and then sank to rest.

The sun had now set. Evening in Italy is far different from what it is in northern latitudes. There it comes on gently and slowly, sometimes prolonging its presence for hours, and the light will be visible until very late. In Italy, however, it is short and abrupt. Almost as soon as the sun disappears the thick shadows come swiftly on and cover every thing. It was so at this time. It seemed but a moment after sunset, and yet every thing was growing indistinct. The clumps of trees grew black; the houses and walls of the city behind all faded into a mass of gloom. The stars shone faintly. There was no moon.

"I will be very late to-night," said Pepita, timidly.

"But are you much later than usual?"

"Oh, very much!"

"There is no danger, is there? But if there is you are safe. I can protect you. Can you trust me?"

"Yes," said Pepita, in a low voice.

It was too dark to see the swiftly-changing color of Pepita's face as Dick murmured some words in her ear. But her hand trembled violently as Dick held it. She did not say a word in response. Dick stood still for a moment and begged her to answer him. She made an effort and whispered some indistinct syllables. Whereupon Dick called her by every endearing name that he could think of, and—— Hasty footsteps! Exclamations! Shouts! They were surrounded! Twelve men or more—stout, strong fellows, magnified by the gloom. Pepita shrieked.

"Who are you?" cried Dick. "Away, or I'll shoot you all. I'm armed."

"Boh!" said one of the men, contemptuously.

"Off!" cried Dick, as the fellow drew near.

He put himself before Pepita to protect her, and thrust his right hand in the breast-pocket of his coat.

"Who is that with you?" said a voice.

At the sound of the voice Pepita uttered a cry. Darting from behind Dick she rushed up to him.

"It is Pepita, Luigi!"

"Pepita! Sister! What do you mean by this?" said the man hoarsely. "Why are you so late? Who is this man?"

"An American gentleman who walked out as far as this to protect me," said Pepita, bursting into tears.

"An American gentleman!" said Luigi, with a bitter sneer. "He came to protect you, did he? Well; we will show him in a few minutes how grateful we are."

Dick stood with folded arms awaiting the result of all this.

"Luigi! dearest brother!" cried Pepita, with a shudder, "on my soul—in the name of the Holy Mother—he is an honorable American gentleman, and he came to protect me."

"Oh! we know, and we will reward him."

"Luigi! Luigi!" moaned Pepita, "if you hurt him I will die!"

"Ah! Has it come to that?" said Luigi, bitterly. "A half-hour's acquaintance, and you talk of dying. Here, Pepita; go home with Ricardo."

"I will not. I will not go a step unless you let him go."

"Oh, we will let him go!"

"Promise me you will not hurt him."

"Pepita, go home!" cried her brother, sternly.

"I will not unless you promise."

"Foolish girl! Do you suppose we are going to break the laws and get into trouble? No, no. Come, go home with Ricardo. I'm going to the city."

Ricardo came forward, and Pepita allowed herself to be led away.

When she was out of sight and hearing Luigi approached Dick. Amid the gloom Dick did not see the wrath and hate that might have been on his face, but the tone of his voice was passionate and menacing. He prepared for the worst.

"That is my sister.—Wretch! what did you mean?"

"I swear—"

"Peace! We will give you cause to remember her."

Dick saw that words and excuses were useless. He thought his hour had come. He resolved to die game. He hadn't a pistol. His manœuvre of putting his hand in his pocket was merely intended to deceive. The Italians thought that

if he had one he would have done more than mention it. He would at least have shown it. He had stationed himself under a tree. The men were before him. Luigi rushed at him like a wild beast. Dick gave him a tremendous blow between his eyes that knocked him headlong.

"You can kill me," he shouted, "but you'll find it hard work!"

Up jumped Luigi, full of fury; half a dozen others rushed simultaneously at Dick. He struck out two vigorous blows, which crashed against the faces of two of them. The next moment he was on the ground. On the ground, but striking well-aimed blows and kicking vigorously. He kicked one fellow completely over. The brutal Italians struck and kicked him in return. At last a tremendous blow descended on his head. He sank senseless.

When he revived it was intensely dark. He was covered with painful bruises. His head ached violently. He could see nothing. He arose and tried to walk, but soon fell exhausted. So he crawled closer to the trunk of the tree, and groaned there in his pain. At last he fell into a light sleep, that was much interrupted by his suffering.

He awoke at early twilight. He was stiff and sore, but very much refreshed. His head did not pain so excessively. He heard the trickling of water near, and saw a brook. There he went and washed himself. The water revived him greatly. Fortunately his clothes were only slightly torn. After washing the blood from his face, and buttoning his coat over his blood-stained shirt, and brushing the dirt from his clothes, he ventured to return to the city.

He crawled rather than walked, often stopping to rest, and once almost fainting from utter weakness. But at last he reached the city, and managed to find a wine-cart, the only vehicle that he could see, which took him to his lodgings. He reached his room before any of the others were up, and went to bed.

AN INTERRUPTION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DICK ON THE SICK LIST.—RAPTURE OF BUTTONS AT MAKING AN IMPORTANT DISCOVERY.

GREAT was the surprise of all on the following morning at finding that Dick was confined to his bed. All were very anxious, and even Buttons showed considerable feeling. For as much as a quarter of an hour he ceased thinking about the Spaniards. Poor Dick! What on earth was the matter? Had he fever? No. Perhaps it was the damp night-air. He should not have been out so late. Where was he? A confounded pity! The Doctor felt his pulse. There was no fever. The patient was very pale, and evidently in great pain. His complaint was a mystery. However, the Doctor recommended perfect quiet, and hoped that a few days would restore him. Dick said not a word about the events of the evening. He thought it would do no good to tell them. He was in great pain. His body was black with frightful bruises, and the depression of his mind was as deep as the pain of his body.

The others went out at their usual hour.

The kind-hearted Senator remained at home all day, and sat by Dick's bedside, sometimes talking, sometimes reading. Dick begged him not to put himself to so much inconvenience on his account; but such language was distasteful to the Senator.

"My boy," he said, "I know that you would do as much for me. Besides, it is a far greater pleasure to do any thing for you than to walk about merely to gratify myself. Don't apologize, or tell me that I am troubling myself. Leave me to do as I please."

Dick's grateful look expressed more than words.

In a few days his pain had diminished, and it was evident that he would be out in a fortnight or so. The kind attentions of his friends affected him greatly. They all spent more time than ever in his room, and never came there without bringing him some little trifle, such as grapes, oranges, or other fruit. The Senator hunted all over Rome for a book, and found Victor Hugo's works, which he bought on a venture, and had the gratification of seeing that it was acceptable.

All suspected something. The Doctor had concluded from the first that Dick had met with an accident. They had too much delicacy to question him, but made many conjectures among themselves. The Doctor thought that he had been among some ruins, and met with a fall. Mr. Figgs suggested that he might have been run over. The Senator thought it was some Italian epidemic. Buttons was incapable of thinking rationally about any thing just then. He was the victim of a monomania: the Spaniards!

About a week after Dick's adventure Buttons was strolling about on his usual quest, when he was attracted by a large crowd around the Chiesa di Gesu. The splendid equipages of the cardinals were crowded about the principal entrance, and from the interior sounds of music came floating magnificently down. Buttons went in to see what was going on. A vast crowd filled the church. Priests in gorgeous vestments officiated at the high altar, which was all ablaze with the light of enormous wax-candles. The gloom of the interior was heightened by the clouds of incense that rolled on high far within the vaulted ceiling.

The Pope was there. In one of the adjoining chambers he was performing a ceremony which sometimes takes place in this church. Guided by instinct, Buttons pressed his way into the chamber. A number of people filled it. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation.

Just as His Holiness was rising to leave, Buttons saw the group that had filled his thoughts for weeks.

The Spaniards! No mistake this time. And he had been right all along. All his efforts had, after all, been based on something tangible. Not in vain had he had so many walks, runnings, chasings, searchings, strolls, so many hopes, fears, desires, discouragements. He was right! Joy, rapture, bliss, ecstasy, delight! There they were: *the little Don*—THE DONNA—IDA!

Buttons, lost for a while in the crowd, and pressed away, never lost sight of the Spaniards. They did not see him, however, until, as they slowly moved out, they were stopped and greeted with astonishing eagerness. The Don shook hands cordially. The Donna—that is, the elder sister—smiled sweetly. Ida blushed and cast down her eyes.

Nothing could be more gratifying than this reception. Where had he been? How long in Rome? Why had they not met before? Strange that they had not seen him about the city. And had he really been here three weeks? Buttons informed them that he had seen them several times, but at a distance. He had been at all the hotels, but had not seen their names.

Hotels! Oh, they lived in lodgings in the Palazzo Concini, not far from the Piazza del Popolo. And how much longer did he intend to stay?—Oh, no particular time. His friends enjoyed themselves here very much. He did

POOR DICK!

not know exactly when they would leave. How long would they remain?—They intended to leave for Florence on the following week.—Ah! He was thinking of leaving for the same place at about the same time. Whereupon the Don expressed a polite hope that they might see one another on the journey.

By this time the crowd had diminished. They looked on while the Pope entered his state-coach, and with strains of music, and prancing of horses, and array of dragoons, drove magnificently away.

The Don turned to Buttons: Would he not accompany them to their lodgings? They were just about returning to dinner. If he were disengaged they should be most happy to have the honor of his company.

Buttons tried very hard to look as though he were not mad with eagerness to accept the invitation, but not very successfully. The carriage drove off rapidly. The Don and Buttons on one seat, the ladies on the other.

Then the face of Ida as she sat opposite! Such a face! Such a smile! Such witchery in her expression! Such music in her laugh!

At any rate so it seemed to Buttons, and that is all that is needed.

On through the streets of Rome; past the post-office, round the column of Antoninus, up the Corso, until at last they stopped in front of an immense edifice which had once been a palace. The descendants of the family lived in a remote corner, and their poverty compelled them to let out all the remainder as lodgings. This is no uncommon thing in Italy. Indeed, there are so many ruined nobles in the country that those are fortunate who have a shelter over their heads. Buttons remarked this to the Don, who told some stories of these fallen nobles. He informed him that in Naples their laundress was said to be the last scion of one of the most ancient families in the kingdom. She was a countess in her own right, but had to work at menial labor. Moreover, many had sunk down to the grade of peasantry, and lived in squalor on lands which were once the estates of their ancestors.

Buttons spent the evening there. The rooms were elegant. Books lay around which showed a cultivated taste. The young man felt himself in a realm of enchantment. The joy of meeting was heightened by their unusual complaisance. During the evening he found out all about them. They lived in Cadiz, where the Don was a merchant. This was their first visit to Italy.

They all had fine perceptions for the beautiful in art or nature, and, besides, a keen sense of the ludicrous. So, when Buttons, growing communicative, told them about Mr. Figgs's adventure in the ball of St. Peter's, they were greatly amused. He told about the adventures of all his friends. He told of himself: all about the chase in Naples Bay, and his pursuit of their carriage from St. Peter's. He did not tell them that he had done this more than once. Ida was amused; but Buttons felt gratified at seeing a little confusion on her face, as though she was conscious of the real cause of such a persevering pursuit. She modestly evaded his glance, and sat at a little distance from the others. Indeed, she said but little during the whole evening.

When Buttons left he felt like a spiritual being. He was not conscious of treading on any material earth, but seemed to float along through enchanted air over the streets into his lodgings, and so on into the realm of dreams.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHAT KIND OF A LETTER THE SENATOR WROTE FOR THE "NEW ENGLAND PATRIOT," WHICH SHOWS A TRUE, LIBERAL, UNBIASED, PLAIN, UNVARNISHED VIEW OF ROME.

"DICK," said the Senator, as he sat with him in his room, "I've been thinking over your tone of mind, more particularly as it appears in those letters which you write home, such as you read the other day. It is a surprising thing to me how a young man with your usual good sense, keenness of perception, and fine education can allow yourself to be so completely carried away by a mawkish sentiment. What is the use of all these memories and fancies and hysterical emotions that you talk about? In one place you call yourself by the absurd name of 'A Pensive Traveller.' Why not be honest? Be a sensible American, exhibiting in your thought and in all your actions the effect of democratic principles and stiff republican institutions. Now I'll read you what I have written. I think the matter is a little nearer the mark than your flights of fancy. But perhaps you don't care just now about hearing it?"

"Indeed I do; so read on," said Dick.

"As I have travelled considerable in Italy," said the Senator, reading from a paper which he drew from his pocket, "with my eyes wide open, I have some idea of the country and of the general condition of the farming class."

The Senator stopped. "I forgot to say that this is for the *New England Patriot*, published in our village, you know."

Dick nodded. The Senator resumed:

"The soil is remarkably rich. Even where there are mountains they are well wooded. So if the fields look well it is not surprising. What is surprising is the cultivation. I saw ploughs such as Adam might have used when forced for the first time to turn up the ground outside the locality of Eden; harrows which were probably invented by Numa Pompey, an old Roman that people talk about.

"They haven't any idea of draining clear. For here is a place called the Pontine Marsh, beautiful soil, surrounded by a settled country, and yet they let it go to waste almost entirely.

"The Italians are lazy. The secret of their bad farming lies in this. For the men loll and smoke on the fences, leaving the poor women to toil in the fields. A woman ploughing! And yet these people want to be free.

"They wear leather leggins, short breeches, and jackets. Many of them wear wooden shoes. The women of the south use a queer kind of outlandish headdress, which if they spent less time in fixing it would be better for their own worldly prosperity.

"The cattle are fine: very broad in the chest, with splendid action. I don't believe any other country can show such cattle. The pigs are certainly the best I ever saw

SKETCHES BY A FRIEND.

by a long chalk. Their chops beat all creation. A friend of mine has made some sketches, which I will give to the Lyceum on my return. They exhibit the Sorrento pig in various attitudes.

"The horses, on the contrary, are poor affairs. I have yet to see the first decent horse. The animals employed by travellers generally are the lowest of their species. The shoes which the horses wear are of a singular shape. I can't describe them in-writing, but they look more like a flat-iron than any thing else.

"I paid a visit to Pompeii, and on coming back I saw some of the carts of the country. They gave one a deplorable idea of the state of the useful arts in this place. Scientific farming is out of the question. If fine plantations are seen it's Nature does it.

"Vineyards abound everywhere. Wine is a great staple of the country. Yet they don't export much after all. In fact, the foreign commerce is comparatively trifling. Chestnuts and olives are raised in immense quantities. The chestnut is as essential to the Italian as the potato is to the Irishman. A failure in the crop is attended with the same disastrous consequences. They dry the nuts, grind them into a kind of flour, and make them into cakes. I tasted one and found it abominable. Yet these people eat it with garlic, and grow fat on it. Chestnut bread, oil instead of butter, wine instead of tea, and you have an Italian meal.

"It's a fine country for fruit. I found Gaeta surrounded by orange groves. The figs an important article in the economy of an Italian household.

"I have been in Rome three weeks Many people take much interest in this place, though quite unnecessarily. I do not think it is at all equal to Boston. Yet I have taken great pains to examine the place. The streets are narrow and crooked, like those of Boston. They are extremely dirty. There are no sidewalks. The gutter is in the middle of the street. The people empty their slops from their windows. The pavements are bad and very slippery. The accumulation of filth about the streets is immense. The drainage is not good. They actually use one old drain which, they tell me, was made three thousand years ago.

"Gas has only been recently introduced. I understand that a year or two ago the streets were lighted by miserable contrivances, consisting of a mean oil lamp swung from the middle of a rope stretched across the street.

"The shops are not worth mentioning. There are no magnificent *Dry-goods Stores*, such as I have seen by the hundred in Boston; no *Hardware Stores;* no palatial *Patent Medicine Edifices;* no signs of enterprise, in fact, at all.

"The houses are very uncomfortable. They are large, and built in the form of a square. People live on separate flats. If it is cold they have no grate and heat it. There are no stoves. I have suffered many times with the cold on some evenings since I have been here than ever I did in-doors at home. I have asked for a fire, but all they could give me was a poisonous fire of charcoal in an earthen pot in a basket.

"Some of their public buildings are good, but that can't make the population comfortable. In fact, the people generally are ill-cared for. Here are the wretched Jews, who live in a filthy quarter of the city crowded together like pigs.

"The people pass the most of their time in coffee-houses. They are an idle set—have nothing in the world to do. It is still a mystery to me how they live.

"The fact is, there are too many soldiers and priests. Now it is evident that these gentry, being non-producers, must be supported directly or indirectly by the producers. This is the cause, I suppose, of the poverty of a great part of the population.

"Begging is reduced to a science. In this I confess the Italian beats the American all to pieces. The American eye has not seen, nor ear heard, the devices of an Italian beggar to get along.

"I have seen them in great crowds waiting outside of a monastery for their dinner, which consists of huge bowls of porridge given by the monks. Can any thing be more ruinous to a people?

"The only trade that I could discover after a long and patient search was the trade in brooches and toys which are bought as curiosities by travellers.

"There are nothing but churches and palaces wherever you go. Some of these palaces are queer-looking concerns. There isn't one in the whole lot equal to some of the Fifth Avenue houses in New York in point of real genuine style.

"There has been too much money spent in churches, and too little on houses. If it amounted to any thing it would not be so bad, but the only effect has been to promote an idle fondness for music and pictures and such like. If they tore down nine-tenths of their churches, and turned them into school-houses on the New England system, it would not be bad for the rising generation.

"The newspapers which they have are miserable things —wretched little sheets, full of lies—no advertisements, no news, no nothing. I got a friend to translate for me what pretended to be the latest American news. It was a col-

inction of murders, duels, railway accidents, and steamboat explosions.

"I don't see what hope there is for this unfortunate country; I don't really. The people have gone on so long in their present course that they are now about incorrigible. If the entire population were to emigrate to the Western States, and mix up with the people there, it might be possible for their descendants in the course of time to amount to something.

"I don't see any hope except perhaps in one plan, which would be no doubt impossible for these lazy and dreamy Italians to carry out. It is this: Let this poor, broken-down, bankrupt Government make an inventory of its whole stock of jewels, gold, gems, pictures, and statues. I understand that the nobility throughout Europe would be willing to pay immense sums of money for these ornaments. If they are fools enough to do so, then in Heaven's name let them have the chance. Clear out the whole stock of rubbish, and let the hard cash come in to replace it. That would be a good beginning, with something tangible to start from. I am told that the ornaments of St. Peter's Cathedral cost ever so many millions of dollars. In the name of goodness why not sell out the stock and realize instead of issuing those ragged notes for twenty-five cents, which circulate among the people here at a discount of about seventy-five per cent.?

"Then let them run a railroad north to Florence and south to Naples. It would open up a fine tract of country which is capable of growing grain; it would tap the great olive-growing districts, and originate a vast trade in oil, wine, and dried fruits.

"The country around Rome is uninhabited, but not barren. It is sickly in summer-time, but if there was a population on it who would cultivate it properly I calculate the malaria would vanish, just as the fever and ague do from many Western districts in our country by the same agencies. I calculate that region could be made one of the most fertile on this round earth if occupied by an industrious class of emigrants.

"But there is a large space inside the walls of the city which could be turned to the best of purposes.

"The place which used to be the Roman Forum is exactly calculated to be the terminus of the railroad which I have suggested. A commodious depôt could be made, and the door-way might be worked up out of the arch of Titus, which now stands blocking up the way, and is of no earthly use.

"The amount of crumbling stones and old ruined walls that they leave about this quarter of the city is astonishing. It ought not to be so.

"What the Government ought to do after being put in funds by the process mentioned above is this:

"The Government ought to tear down all those unsightly heaps of stone and erect factories and industrial schools. There is plenty of material to do it with. For instance, take the old ruin called the Coliseum. It is a fact, arrived at by elaborate calculation, that the entire contents of that concern are amply sufficient to construct no less than one hundred and fifty handsome factories, each two hundred feet by seventy-five.

"The factories being built, they could be devoted to the production of the finer tissues. Silks and velvets could be produced here. Glass-ware of all kinds could be made. There is a fine Italian clay that makes nice cups and crocks.

"I could also suggest the famous Roman cement as an additional article of export. The Catacombs under the city could be put to some direct practical use.

"I have hastily put out these few ideas to show what a liberal and enlightened policy might effect even in such an unpromising place as Rome. It is not probable, however, that my scheme would meet with favor here. The leading classes in this city are such an incurable set of old fogies that, I verily believe, rather than do what I have suggested, they would choose to have the earth open beneath them and swallow them up forever—city, churches, statues, pictures, museums, palaces, ruins and all.

"I've got a few other ideas, some of which will work some day. Suppose Russia should sell us her part of America, Spain sell us Cuba, Italy give us Rome, Turkey an island or two—then what? But I'll keep this for another letter."

"That's all," said the Senator.

Dick's face was drawn up into the strangest expression. He did not say any thing, however. The Senator calmly folded up his paper, and with a thoughtful air took up his hat.

"I'm going to that Coliseum again to measure a place I forgot," said he.

Upon which he retired, leaving Dick alone.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LONELY ONE AND HIS COMFORTER.—THE TRUE MEDICINE FOR A SICK MAN.

Dick was alone in his chamber. Confinement to his room was bad enough, but what was that in comparison with the desolation of soul that afflicted him? Pepita was always in his thoughts. The bright moment was alone remembered, and the black sequel could not efface her image. Yet his misadventure showed him that his chances of seeing her again were extremely slight. But how could he give her up? They would soon be leaving for Florence. How could he live never to see her again—the lovely, the sweet, the tender, the— A faint knock [illegible] dog.

"Come in," said Dick, without rising from his chair.

A female entered. She was dressed in black. A thick veil hid her features, but her bent figure denoted age and weariness. She slowly closed the door.

"Is it here where a young American lives with this name?"

She held out a card. It was his name, his card. He had only given it to one person in Rome, and that one was Pepita.

"Oh!" cried Dick, rising, his whole expression changing from sadness to eager and beseeching hope, "oh, if you know where she is—where I may find her—"

The female raised her form, then with a hand that trembled excessively she slowly lifted her veil. It was a face not old and wrinkled but young and lovely, with tearful eyes downcast, and cheeks suffused with blushes.

With an eager cry Dick bounded from his chair and caught her in his arms. [illegible] a word was spoken. He held her in a strong embrace as though he would not let her go. At last he drew her to a seat beside him, still holding her in his arms.

"I could not stay away. I led you into misfortune. Oh, how you have suffered! You are thin and wan. What a wretch am I! When you see me no more will you forgive me?"

"Forgive!" and Dick replied in a more emphatic way than words afford.

"They would not let me leave the house for ten days. They told me if I ever dared to see you again they would kill you. So I knew you were not dead. But I did not know how they had beaten you till one day Ricardo told me all. To think of you [illegible] fighting so gallantly. Four of them were so bruised that they have not yet recovered. To-day Luigi went to Civita Vecchia. He told me that if I dared to go to Rome he would send me to a convent. But I disobeyed him. I could not rest. I had to come and see how you were, and to—bid—adieu—"

"Adieu! bid adieu?—never. I will not let you."

"Ah, now you talk wildly," said Pepita, mournfully, "for you know we must p[illegible]"

"We shall not part."

"I will have to go home, and you can not follow me."

"Oh, Pepita, I can not give you up. You shall be mine—now—my wife—and come with me home—to America. And we shall never again have to part."

"Impossible," said Pepita, as big tear-drops fell from her eyes. "Impossible!"

"Why impossible?"

"Luigi would track us to the end of the world."

"Track us! I would like to see him try it!" cried Dick in a fury. "I have an account to settle with him which will not be pleasant for him to pay. Who is he to dare to stand between me and you? As to following me—Well, I have already given him a specimen of what I am. I would give a year of my life to have him alone for about half an hour."

"You wrong him," cried Pepita, earnestly. "You wrong him. You must not talk so. He is not a bravo. He is my brother. He has been like a father to me. He loves me dearly, and my good name is dearer to him than life. He is so good and so noble, dear Luigi! It was his love for me that blinded him and made him furious. He thought you were deceiving us all, and would not listen to you."

"But if he were so noble would he have attacked one unarmed man, and he at the head of a dozen?"

"I tell you," cried Pepita, "you do not know him. He was so blinded by passion that he had no mercy. Oh, I owe every thing to him! And I know how good and noble he is!"

"Pepita, for your sake I will forgive him every thing."

"I can not stay longer," said Pepita, making an effort to rise.

"Oh, Pepita! you can not leave me forever."

Pepita fell weeping into his arms, her slender form convulsed with emotion.

"You shall not."

"I must—there is no help."

"Why must you? Can you not fly with me? What prevents you from being mine? Let us go and be united in the little church where I saw you first."

"Impossible!" moaned Pepita.

"Why?"

"Because I could not do you such injustice. You have your father far away in America. You might offend him."

"Bother my father!" cried Dick.

Pepita looked shocked.

"I mean—he would allow me to do any thing I liked, and glory in it, because I did it. He would chuckle over it for a month."

"Luigi—"

"Pepita, do you love him better than me?"

"No, but if I leave him so it would break his heart. He will think I am ruined. He will declare a vendetta against you, and follow you to the end of the world."

"Is there no hope?"

"No—not now."

"Not now? And when will there be? Can it be possible that you would give me up? Then I would not give you up! If you do not love me I must love you."

"Cruel!" murmured Pepita.

"Forgive," said Dick, penitently. "Perhaps I am too sudden. If I come back again in two or three months will you be as hard-hearted as you are now?"

"Hard-hearted!" sighed Pepita, tearfully. "You should not reproach me. My troubles are more than I can bear. It is no slight thing that you ask."

"Will waiting soften you? Will it make any difference? If I came for you—"

"You must not leave me so," said Pepita, reproachfully. "I will tell you all. You will understand me better. Listen. My family is noble."

"Noble!" cried Dick, thunderstruck. He had certainly always thought her astonishingly lady-like for a peasant girl, but attributed this to the superior refinement of the Italian race.

"Yes, noble," said Pepita, proudly. "We seem now only poor peasants. Yet once we were rich and powerful. My grandfather lost all in the wars in the time of Napoleon, and only left his descendants an honorable name. Alas! honor and titles are worth but little when one is poor. My brother Luigi is the Count di Gianti."

"And you are the Countess di Gianti."

"Yes," said Pepita, smiling at last, and happy at the change that showed itself in Dick. "I am the Countess Pepita di Gianti. Can you understand now my dear Luigi's high sense of honor and the fury that he felt when he thought that you intended an insult? Our poverty, which we can not escape, chafes him sorely. If I were to desert him thus suddenly it would kill him."

"Oh, Pepita! if waiting will win you I will wait for years. Is there any hope?"

"When will you leave Rome?"

"In a few days my friends leave."

"Then do not stay behind. If you do you can not see me."

"But if I come again in two or three months? What then? Can I see you?"

"Perhaps," said Pepita, timidly.

"And you will not refuse? No, no! You can not! How can I find you?"

"Alas! you will by that time forget all about me."

"Cruel Pepita! How can you say I will forget? Would I not die for you? How can I find you?"

"The Padre Liguori."

"Who?"

"Padre Liguori, at the little church. The tall priest—the one who spoke to you."

"But he will refuse. He hates me."

"He is a good man. If he thinks you are honorable he will be your friend. He is a true friend to me."

"I will see him before I leave and tell him all."

There were voices below.

Pepita started.

"They come. I must go," said she, dropping her veil.

"Confound them!" cried Dick.

"*Addio!*" sighed Pepita.

Dick caught her in his arms. She tore herself away with sobs.

She was gone.

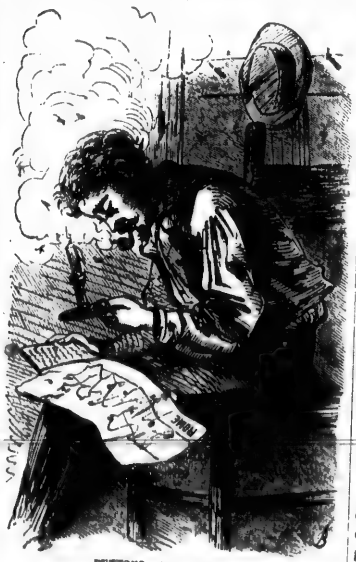
Dick sank back in his chair, with his eyes fixed hungrily on the door.

"Hallo!" burst the Doctor's voice on his ears. "Who's that old girl? Hey? Why, Dick, how pale you are! You're worse. Hang it! you'll have a relapse if you don't look out. You must make a total change in your diet—more stimulating drink and generous food. However, the drive to Florence will set you all right again."

CHAPTER XXX.

OCCUPATIONS AND PEREGRINATIONS OF BUTTONS.

If Buttons had spent little time in his room before he now spent less. He was exploring the ruins of Rome, the churches, the picture galleries, and the palaces under new auspices. He knew the name of every palace and church in the place. He acquired this knowledge by means of superhuman application to "Murray's Hand-book" on the evenings after leaving his companions. They were enthusiastic, particularly the ladies. They were perfectly familiar with all the Spanish painters and many of the Italian. Buttons felt himself far inferior to them in real familiarity with Art, but he made amends by brilliant criticisms of a transcendental nature.



BUTTONS AND MURRAY.

It was certainly a pleasant occupation for youth, sprightliness, and beauty. To wander all day long through that central world from which forever emanate all that is fairest and most enticing in Art, Antiquity, and Religion; to have a soul open to the reception of all these influences, and to have all things glorified by Almighty love; in short, to be in love in Rome.

Rome is an inexhaustible store-house of attractions. For the lovers of gayety there are the drives of the Pincian Hill, or the Villa Borghese. For the student, ruins whose very dust is eloquent. For the artist, treasures beyond price. For the devotee, religion. How fortunate, thought Buttons, that in addition to all this there is, for the lovers of the beautiful, beauty!

Day after day they visited new scenes. Upon the whole, perhaps, the best way to see the city, when one can not spend one's life there, is to take Murray's Hand-book, and, armed with that red necessity, dash energetically at the work; see every thing that is mentioned; hurry it up in the orthodox manner; then throw the book away, and go over the ground anew, wandering easily wherever fancy leads.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BUTTONS ACTS THE GOOD SAMARITAN, AND LITERALLY UNEARTHS A MOST UNEXPECTED VICTIM OF AN ATROCIOUS ROBBERY.—GR-R-R-ACIOUS ME!

To these, once wandering idly down the Appian Way, the ancient tower of Metella rose invitingly. The carriage stopped, and ascending, they walked up to the entrance. They marvelled at the enormous blocks of travertine of which the edifice was built, the noble simplicity of the style, the venerable garment of ivy which hid the ravages of time.

The door was open, and they walked in. Buttons first; the ladies timidly following; and the Don bringing up the rear. Suddenly a low groan startled them. It seemed to come from the very depths of the earth. The ladies gave a shriek, and dashing past their brother, ran out. The Don paused. Buttons of course advanced. He never felt so extensive in his life before. What a splendid opportunity to give an exhibition of manly courage! So he walked on, and shouted:

"Who's there?"

A groan!

Further in yet, till he came to the inner chamber. It was dark there, the only light coming in through the passages. Through the gloom he saw the figure of a man lying on the floor so tied that he could not move.

"Who are you? What's the matter?"

"Let me loose, for God's sake!" said a voice, in thick Italian, with a heavy German accent. "I'm a traveller. I've been robbed by brigands."

To snatch his knife from his pocket, to cut the cords that bound the man, to lift him to his feet, and then to start back with a cry of astonishment, were all the work of an instant. By this time the others had entered.

The man was a German, unmistakably. He stood blinking and staring. Then he stretched his several limbs and rubbed himself. Then he took a long survey of the new-comers. Then he stroked a long, red, forked beard, and, in tones expressive of the most profound bewilderment, slowly ejaculated—

"Gr-r-r-r-acious me!"

"Meinheer Schatt!" cried Buttons, grasping his hand. "How in the name of wonder did you get here? What has happened to you? Who tied you up? Were you robbed? Were you beaten? Are you hurt? But come out of this dark hole to the sunshine."

Meinheer Schatt walked slowly out, saying nothing to these rapid inquiries of Buttons. The German intellect is profound, but slow; and so Meinheer Schatt took a long time to collect his scattered ideas. Buttons found that he was quite faint; so producing a flask from his pocket he made him drink a little precious cordial, which revived him greatly. After a long pull he heaved a heavy sigh, and looked with a piteous expression at the new-comers. The kind-hearted Spaniards insisted on taking him to their carriage. He was too weak to walk. They would drive him. They would listen to no refusal. So Meinheer Schatt was safely deposited in the carriage, and told his story.

He had come out very early in the morning to visit the Catacombs. He chose the early part of the day so as to be back before it got hot. Arriving at the Church of St. Sebastian he found to his disappointment that it was not open yet. So he thought he would beguile the time by walking about. So he strolled off to the tomb of Cæcelia Metella, which was the most striking object in view. He walked around it, and broke off a few pieces of stone. He took also a few pieces of ivy. These he intended to carry away as relics. At last he ventured to enter and examine the interior. Scarce had he got inside than he heard footsteps without. The door was blocked up by a number of ill-looking men, who came in and caught him.

Meinheer Schatt confessed that he was completely overcome by terror. However, he at last mustered sufficient strength to ask what they wanted.

"You are our prisoner!"

"Why? Who are you?"

"We are the secret body-guard of His Holiness, appointed by the Sacred Council of the Refectory," said one of the men, in a mocking tone.

Then Meinheer Schatt knew that they were robbers. Still he indignantly protested that he was an unoffending traveller.

"It's false! You have been mutilating the sacred sepulchre of the dead, and violating the sanctity of their repose!"

And the fellow, thrusting his hands in the prisoner's pockets, brought forth the stones and ivy. The others looked into his other pockets, examined his hat, made him strip, shook his clothes, pried into his boots—in short, gave him a thorough overhaul.

They found nothing, except, as Meinheer acknowledged, with a faint smile, a piece of the value of three half-cents American, which he had brought as a fee to the guide through the Catacombs. It was that bit of money that caused his bonds. It maddened them. They danced around him in perfect fury, and asked what he meant by daring to come out and give them so much trouble with only that bit of impure silver about him.

"Dog of a Tedescho! Your nation has trampled upon our liberties; but Italy shall be avenged! Dog! scoundrel! villain! Tedescho! Tedes-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-s-cho!"

The end of it was that Meinheer Schatt was tied in a singularly uncomfortable position and left there. He thought he had been there about five hours. He was faint and hungry.

They took him home.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER DISCOVERY MADE BY BUTTONS.

On the evening after this adventure the Don turned the conversation into a new channel. They all grew communicative. Buttons told them that his father was an extensive merchant and ship-owner in Boston. His business extended over many parts of the world. He thought he might have done something in Cadiz.

"Your father a ship-owner in Boston! I thought you belonged to New York," said the Don, in surprise.

"Oh," said Buttons, "I said I came from there. The fact is, I lived there four years at college, and will live there when I return."

"And your father lives in Boston," said the Don, with an interest that surprised Buttons.

"Yes."

"Is his name Hiram Buttons?"

"Yes," cried Buttons, eagerly. "How do you know?"

"My dear Sir," cried the Don, "Hiram Buttons and I are not only old business correspondents, but I hope I can add personal friends."

The Don rose and grasped Buttons cordially by the hand. The young man was overcome by surprise, delight, and triumph.

"I liked you from the first," said the Don. "You bear your character in your face. I was happy to receive you into our society. But now I feel a still higher pleasure, for I find you are

the son of a man for whom I assure you I entertain an infinite respect."

The sisters were evidently delighted at the scene. As to Buttons, he was overcome.

Thus far he often felt delicacy about his position among them, and fears of intruding occasionally interfered with his enjoyment. His footing now was totally different; and the most punctilious Spaniard could find no fault with his continued intimacy.

"Hurrah for that abominable old office, and that horrible business to which the old gentleman tried to bring me! It has turned out the best thing for me. What a capital idea it was for the governor to trade with Cadiz!"

Such were the thoughts of Buttons as he went home.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Βρεκεκὲκ κοὰξ κοὰξ κοάξ.

In his explorations of the nooks and corners of Rome the Senator was compelled for some time to make his journeys alone. He sometimes felt regret that he had not some interpreter with him on these occasions; but on the whole he thought he was well paid for his trouble, and he stored up in his memory an incredible number of those items which are usually known as "useful facts."

On one of these occasions he entered a very common café near one of the gates, and as he felt hungry he determined to get his dinner. He had long felt a desire to taste those "frogs" of which he had heard so much, and which to his great surprise he had never yet seen. On coming to France he of course felt confident that he would find frogs as common as potatoes on every dinner-table. To his amazement he had not yet seen one.

He determined to have some now. But how could he get them? How ask for them?

"Pooh! easy enough!" said the Senator to himself, with a smile of superiority. "I wish I could ask for every thing else as easily."

So he took his seat at one of the tables, and gave a thundering rap to summon the waiter. All the café had been startled by the advent of the large foreigner. And evidently a rich man, for he was an Englishman, as they thought. So up came the waiter with a very low bow, and a very dirty jacket; and all the rest of the people in the café looked at the Senator out of the corner of their eyes, and stopped talking. The Senator gazed with a calm, serene face and steady eye upon the waiter.

"Signore?" said the waiter, interrogatively.

"*Gunk! gung!*" said the Senator, solemnly, without moving a muscle.

The waiter stared.

"*Che vuol ella?*" he repeated, in a faint voice.

"*Gunk! gung!*" said the Senator, as solemnly as before.

"Non capisco."

"*Gunk gung! gunkety gunk gung!*"

The waiter shrugged his shoulders till they reached the upper part of his ears. The Senator looked for a moment at him, and saw that he did not understand him. He looked at the floor involved in deep thought. At last he raised his eyes once more to meet those of the waiter, which still were fixed upon him, and placing the palms of his hands on his hips, threw back his head, and with his eyes still fixed steadfastly upon the waiter he gave utterance to a long shrill gurgle such as he thought the frogs might give:

Βρεκεκεκὲκ κοὰξ κοάξ,
Βρεκεκεκὲκ κοὰξ κοάξ.

ΒΡΕΚΕΚΕΚΕΚΕΚ ΚΟΑΞ ΚΟΑΞ!

(Recurrence must be made to Aristophanes, who alone of articulate speaking men has written down the utterance of the common frog.)

The waiter started back. All the men in the café jumped to their feet.

"*Βρεκεκεκὲκ κοὰξ κοάξ,*" continued the Senator, quite patiently. The waiter looked frightened.

"Will you give me some or not?" cried the Senator, indignantly.

"Signore," faltered the waiter. Then he ran for the café-keeper.

The café-keeper came. The Senator repeated the words mentioned above, though somewhat angrily. The keeper brought forward every customer in the house to see if any one could understand the language.

"It's German," said one.

"It's English," said another.

"Bah!" said a third. "It's Russian."

"No," said a fourth, "it's Bohemian; for Carolo Quinto said that Bohemian was the language of the devil." And Number Four, who was rather an intelligent-looking man, eyed the Senator compassionately.

"*Gunk gung; gunkety gung!*" cried the Senator, frowning; for his patience had at last deserted him.

The others looked at him helplessly, and some, thinking of the devil, piously crossed themselves. Whereupon the Senator rose in majestic wrath, and shaking his purse in the face of the café-keeper, shouted:

"You're worse than a nigger!" and stalked grandly out of the place.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SENATOR PURSUES HIS INVESTIGATIONS.—AN INTELLIGENT ROMAN TOUCHES A CHORD IN THE SENATOR'S HEART THAT VIBRATES.—RESULTS OF THE VIBRATION.—A VISIT FROM THE ROMAN POLICE; AND THE GREAT RACE DOWN THE CORSO BETWEEN THE SENATOR AND A ROMAN SPY.—GLEE OF THE POPULACE!—HI! HI!

He did not ask for frogs again; but still he did not falter in his examination into the life of the people. Still he sauntered through the remoter corners of Rome, wandering over to the other side of the Tiber, or through the Ghetto, or among the crooked streets at the end of the Corso. Few have learned so much of Rome in so short a time.

On one occasion he was sitting in a café, where he had supplied his wants in the following way:

"Hi! coffee! coffee!" and again, "Hi! cigar! cigar!" when his eye was attracted by a man at the next table who was reading a copy of the London *Times*, which he had spread out very ostentatiously. After a brief survey the Senator walked over to his table and, with a beaming smile, said—

"Good-day, Sir."

The other man looked up and returned a very friendly smile.

"And how do you do, Sir?"

"Very well, I thank you," said the other, with a strong Italian accent.

"Do you keep your health?"

"Thank you, yes," said the other, evidently quite pleased at the advances of the Senator.

"Nothing gives me so much pleasure," said the Senator, "as to come across an Italian who understands English. You, Sir, are a Roman, I presume."

"Sir, I am."

The man to whom the Senator spoke was not one who would have attracted any notice from him if it had not been for his knowledge of English. He was a narrow-headed, mean-looking man, with very seedy clothes, and a servile but cunning expression.

"How do you like Rome?" he asked of the Senator.

The Senator at once poured forth all that had been in his mind since his arrival. He gave his opinion about the site, the architecture, the drains, the municipal government, the beggars, and the commerce of the place; then the soldiers, the nobles, the priests, monks, and nuns.

Then he criticised the Government, its form, its mode of administration, enlarged upon its tyranny, condemned vehemently its police system, and indeed its whole administration of every thing, civil, political, and ecclesiastical.

Waxing warmer with the sound of his own eloquence, he found himself suddenly but naturally reminded of a country where all this is reversed. So he went on to speak about Freedom, Republicanism, the Rights of Man, and the Ballot-Box. Unable to talk with sufficient fluency while in a sitting posture he rose to his feet, and as he looked around, seeing that all present were staring at him, he made up his mind to improve the occasion. So he harangued the crowd generally, not because he thought any of them could understand him, but it was so long since he had made a speech that the present opportunity was irresistible. Besides, as he afterward remarked, he felt that it was a crisis, and who could tell but that a word spoken in season might produce some beneficial effects.

He shook hands very warmly with his new friend after it all was over, and on leaving him made him promise to come and see him at his lodgings, where he would show him statistics, etc. The Senator then returned.

That evening he received a visit. The Senator heard a rap at his door and called out "Come in." Two men entered—ill-looking, or rather malignant-looking, clothed in black.

Dick was in his room, Buttons out, Figgs and the Doctor had not returned from the café. The Senator insisted on shaking hands with both his visitors. One of these men spoke English.

"His Excellency," said he, pointing to the other, "wishes to speak to you on official business."

"Happy to hear it," said the Senator.

"His Excellency is the Chief of the Police, and I am the Interpreter."

Whereupon the Senator shook hands with both of them again.

"Proud to make your acquaintance," said he. "I am personally acquainted with the Chief of the Boston police, and also of the Chief of the New York police, and my opinion is that they can stand more liquor than any men I ever met with. Will you liquor?"

The interpreter did not understand. The Senator made an expressive sign. The Interpreter mentioned the request to the Chief, who shook his head coldly.

"This is formal," said the Interpreter—"not social."

The Senator's face flushed. He frowned.

"Give him my compliments then, and tell him the next time he refuses a gentleman's offer he had better do it like a gentleman. For

GOT YOU THERE!

my part, if I chose to be uncivil, I might say that I consider your Roman police very small potatoes."

The Interpreter translated this literally, and though the final expression was not very intelligible, yet it seemed to imply contempt.

So the Chief of Police made his communication as sternly as possible. Grave reports had been made about His American Excellency. The Senator looked surprised.

"What about?"

That he was haranguing the people, going about secretly, plotting, and trying to instill revolutionary sentiments into the public mind.

"Pooh!" said the Senator.

The Chief of Police bade him be careful. He would not be permitted to stir up an excitable populace. This was to give him warning.

"Pooh!" said the Senator again.

And if he neglected this warning it would be the worse for him. And the Chief of Police looked unutterable things. The Senator gazed at him sternly and somewhat contemptuously for a few minutes.

"You're no great shakes anyhow," said he.

"Signore?" said the Interpreter.

"Doesn't it strike you that you are talking infernal nonsense?" asked the Senator in a slightly argumentative tone of voice, throwing one leg over another, tilting back his chair, and folding his arms.

"Your language is disrespectful," was the indignant reply.

"Yours strikes me as something of the same kind, too; but more—it is absurd."

"What do you mean?"

"You say I stir up the people."

"Yes. Do you deny it?"

"Pooh! How can a man stir up the people when he can't speak a word of their language?"

The Chief of Police did not reply for a moment.

"I rather think I've got you there," said the Senator, dryly. "Hey? old Hoss?"

("Old Hoss" was an epithet which he used when he was in a good humor.) He felt that he had the best of it here, and his anger was gone. He therefore tilted his chair back further, and placed his feet upon the back of a chair that was in front of him.

"There are Italians in Rome who speak English," was at length the rejoinder.

"I wish I could find some then," said the Senator. "It's worse than looking for a needle in a hay-stack, they're so precious few."

"You have met one."

"And I can't say I feel over-proud of the acquaintance," said the Senator, in his former dry tone, looking hard at the Interpreter.

"At the Café Cenácci, I mean."

"The what? Where's that?"

"Where you were this morning."

"Oh ho! that's it—ah? And was my friend there one of your friends too?" asked the Senator, as light burst in upon him.

"He was sufficiently patriotic to give warning."

"Oh—patriotic?—he was, was he?" said the Senator, slowly, while his eyes showed a dangerous light.

"Yes—patriotic. He has watched you for some time."

"Watched *me!*" and the Senator frowned wrathfully.

"Yes, all over Rome, wherever you went."

"Watched *me!* dogged *me!* tracked *me!* Ah!"

"So you are known."

"Then the man is a spy."

"He is a patriot."

"Why the mean concern sat next me, attracted my attention by reading English, and encouraged me to speak as I did. Why don't you arrest him?"

"He did it to test you."

"To test me? How would it do me to test him?"

"The Government looks on your offence with lenient eyes."

"Ah!"

"And contents themselves this time with giving you warning."

"Very much obliged; but tell your Government not to be alarmed. I won't hurt them."

Upon this the two visitors took their leave.

The Senator informed his two friends about the visit, and thought very little about it; but the recollection of one thing rankled in his mind.

That spy! The fellow had humbugged him. He had dogged him, tracked him, perhaps for weeks, had drawn him into conversation, asked leading questions, and then given information. If there was any thing on earth that the Senator loathed it was this.

But how could such a man be punished? That was the thought. Punishment could only come from one. The law could do nothing. But there was one who could do something, and that one was himself. Lynch law!

"My fayther was from Bosting,
My uncle was Judge Lynch,
So, darn your fire and roasting,
You can not make me flinch."

The Senator hummed the above elegant words all that evening.

He thought he could find the man yet. He was sure he would know him. He would devote himself to this on the next day. The next day he went about the city, and at length in the afternoon he came to Pincian Hill. There was

WALKING SPANISH.

a great crowd there as usual. The Senator placed himself in a favorable position, in which he could only be seen from one point, and then watched with the eye of a hawk.

He watched for about an hour. At the end of that time he saw a face. It belonged to a man who had been leaning against a post with his back turned toward the Senator all this time. It was *the face!* The fellow happened to turn it far enough round to let the Senator see him. He was evidently watching him yet. The Senator walked rapidly toward him. The man saw him and began to move as rapidly away. The Senator increased his pace. So did the man. The Senator walked still faster. So did the man. The Senator took long strides. The man took short, quick ones. It is said that the fastest pedestrians are those who take short, quick steps. The Senator did not gain on the other.

By this time a vast number of idlers had been attracted by the sight of these two men walking as if for a wager. At last the Senator began to run. So did the man!

The whole thing was plain. One man was chasing the other. At once all the idlers of the Pincian Hill stopped all their avocations and turned to look. The road winds down the Pincian Hill to the Piazza del Popolo, and those on the upper part can look down and see the whole extent. What a place for a race! The quick-eyed Romans saw it all.

"A spy! yes, a Government spy!"

"Chased by an eccentric Englishman!"

A loud shout burst from the Roman crowd. But a number of English and Americans thought differently. They saw a little man chased by a big one. Some cried "Shame!" Others, thinking it a case of pocket-picking, cried "Stop thief!" Others cried "Go it, little fellow! Two to one on the small chap!"

Every body on the Pincian Hill rushed to the edge of the winding road to look down, or to the paved walk that overlooks the Piazza. Carriages stopped and the occupants looked down. French soldiers, dragoons, guards, officers—all staring.

And away went the Senator. And away ran the terrified spy. Down the long way, and at length they came to the Piazza del Popolo. A loud shout came from all the people. Above and on all sides they watched the race. The spy darted down the Corso. The Senator after him.

The Romans in the street applauded vociferously. Hundreds of people stopped, and then turned and ran after the Senator. All the windows were crowded with heads. All the balconies were filled with people.

Down along the Corso. Past the column of Antonine. Into a street on the left. The Senator was gaining! At last they came to a square. A great fountain of water [illegible] forth there. The spy ran to the other side of the square, and just as he was darting [illegible] side alley the Senator's hand clutched his pony-tails!

The Senator took the spy in that way by which one is enabled to make any other do what is called "Walking Spanish," and propelled him rapidly toward the reservoir of the fountain.

The Senator raised the spy from the ground and pitched him into the pool.

The air was rent with acclamations and cries of delight.

As the spy emerged, half-drowned, the crowd came forward and would have prolonged the delightful sensation.

Not often did they have a spy in their hands.

DICK THINKS IT OVER.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DICK MAKES ANOTHER EFFORT, AND BEGINS TO FEEL ENCOURAGED.

PEPITA's little visit was beneficial to Dick. It showed him that he was not altogether cut off from her. Before that he had grown to think of her as almost inaccessible; now she seemed to have a will, and, what is better, a heart of her own, which would lead her to do her share toward meeting him again. Would it not be better now to comply with her evident desire, and leave Rome for a little while? He could return again. But how could he tear himself away? Would it not be far better to remain and seek her? He could not decide. He thought of Padre Liguori. He had grossly insulted that gentleman, and the thought of meeting him again made him feel blank. Yet he was in some way or other a protector of Pepita, a guardian, perhaps, and as such had

influence over her fortunes. If he could only disarm hostility from Padre Liguori it would be undoubtedly for his benefit. Perhaps Padre Liguori would become his friend, and try to influence Pepita's family in his favor. So he decided on going to see Padre Liguori.

The new turn which had been given to his feelings by Pepita's visit had benefited him in mind and body. He was quite strong enough for a long walk. Arriving at the church he had no difficulty in finding Liguori. The priest advanced with a look of surprise.

"Before mentioning the object of my visit," said Dick, bowing courteously, "I owe you an humble apology for a gross insult. I hope you will forgive me."

The priest bowed.

"After I left here I succeeded in my object," continued Dick.

"I heard so," said Liguori, coldly.

"And you have heard also that I met with a terrible punishment for my presumption, or whatever else you may choose to call it."

"I heard of that also," said the priest, sternly. "And do you complain of it? Tell me. Was it not deserved?"

"If their suspicions and yours had been correct, then the punishment would have been well deserved. But you all wrong me. I entreat you to believe me. I am no adventurer. I am honest and sincere."

"We have only your word for this," said Liguori, coldly.

"What will make you believe that I am sincere, then?" said Dick. "What proof can I give?"

"You are safe in offering to give proofs in a case where none can be given."

"I am frank with you. Will you not be so with me? I come to you to try to convince you of my honesty, Padre Liguori. I love Pepita as truly and as honorably as it is possible for man to love. It was that feeling that so bewildered me that I was led to insult you. I went out in the midst of danger, and would have died for her. With these feelings I can not give her up."

"I have heard sentiment like this often before. What is your meaning?"

"I am rich and of good family in my own country; and I am determined to have Pepita for my wife."

"Your wife!"

"Yes," said Dick, resolutely. "I am honorable and open about it. My story is short. I love her, and wish to make her my wife."

The expression of Liguori changed entirely.

"Ah! this makes the whole matter different altogether. I did not know this before. Nor did the Count. But he is excusable. A sudden passion blinded him, and he attacked you. I will tell you"—and at each word the priest's manner grew more friendly—"I will tell you how it is, Signore. The Giantis were once a powerful family, and still have their title. I consider myself as a kind of appanage to the family, for my ancestors for several generations were their *maggiordomos*. Poverty at last stripped them of every thing, and I, the last of the family dependents, entered the Church. But I still preserve my respect and love for them. You can understand how bitterly I would resent and avenge any base act or any wrong done to them. You can understand Luigi's vengeance also."

"I thought as much," said Dick. "I thought you were a kind of guardian, and so I came here to tell you frankly how it is. I love her. I can make her rich and happy. To do so is the desire of my heart. Why should I be turned away? Or if there be any objection, what is it?"

"There is no objection—none whatever, if Pepita is willing, and you sincerely love her. I think that Luigi would give his consent."

"Then what would prevent me from marrying her at once?"

"At once!"

"Certainly."

"You show much ardor; but still an immediate marriage is impossible. There are various reasons for this. In the first place, we love Pepita too dearly to let her go so suddenly to some one who merely feels a kind of impulse. We should like to know that there is some prospect of her being happy. We have cherished her carefully thus far, and will not let her go without having some security about her happiness."

"Then I will wait as long as you like, or send for my friends to give you every information you desire to have; or if you want me to give any proofs, in any way, about any thing, I'm ready."

"There is another thing," said Liguori, "which I hope you will take kindly. You are young and in a foreign country. This sudden impulse may be a whim. If you were to marry now you might bitterly repent it before three months were over. Under such circumstances it would be misery for you and her. If this happened in your native country you could be betrothed and wait. There is also another reason why waiting is absolutely necessary. It will take some time to gain her brother's consent. Now her brother is poor, but he might have been rich. He is a Liberal, and belongs to the National party. He hates the present system here most bitterly. He took part in the Roman Republican movement a few years ago, and was imprisoned after the return of the Pope, and lost the last vestige of his property by confiscation. He now dresses coarsely, and declines to associate with any Romans, except a few who are members of a secret society with him. He is very closely watched by the Government, so that he has to be quiet. But he expects to rise to eminence and power, and even wealth, before very long. So you see he does not look upon his sister as a mere common every-day match. He expects to elevate her to the highest rank, where she can find the best in the country around her. For my own part I think

this is doubtful; and if you are in earnest I should do what I could to further your interest. But it will take some time to persuade the Count."

"Then, situated as I am, what can I do to gain her?" asked Dick.

"Are your friends thinking of leaving Rome soon?"

"Yes, pretty soon."

"Do not leave them. Go with them. Pursue the course you originally intended, just as though nothing had happened. If after your tour is finished you find that your feelings are as strong as ever, and that she is as dear to you as you say, then you may return here."

"And you?"

"I think all objections may be removed."

"It will take some weeks to finish our tour."

"Some weeks! Oh, do not return under three months at least."

"Three months! that is very long!"

"Not too long. The time will soon pass away. If you do not really love her you will be glad at having escaped; if you do you will rejoice at having proved your sincerity."

Some further conversation passed, after which Dick, finding the priest inflexible, ceased to persuade, and acceded to his proposal.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHOWING HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO GET A LAUNDRESS, FOR THE SENATOR WANTED ONE, AND NOT KNOWING THE LANGUAGE GOT INTO A SCRAPE, NOT BY HIS OWN FAULT, FOR HE WAS CAREFUL ABOUT COMMITTING HIMSELF WITH THE LADIES; BUT PRAY, WAS IT HIS FAULT IF THE LADIES WOULD TAKE A FANCY TO HIM?

SIGNORA MIRANDOLINA ROCCA, who was the landlady of the house where the Club were lodging, was a widow, of about forty years of age, still fresh and blooming, with a merry dark eye, and much animation of features. Sitting usually in the small room which they passed on the way to their apartments, they had to stop to get their keys, or to leave them when they went out, and Buttons and Dick frequently stopped to have a little conversation. The rest, not being able to speak Italian, contented themselves with smiles; the Senator particularly, who gave the most beaming of smiles both on going and on returning. Sometimes he even tried to talk to her in his usual adaptation of broken English, spoken in loud tones to the benighted but fascinating foreigner. Her attention to Dick during his sickness increased the Senator's admiration, and he thought her one of the best, one of the most kind-hearted and sympathetic of beings.

One day, toward the close of their stay in Rome, the Senator was in a fix. He had not had any washing done since he came to the city. He had run through all his clean linen, and came to a dead stand. Before leaving for another place it was absolutely necessary to attend to this. But how? Buttons was off with the Spaniards; Dick had gone out on a drive. No one could help him, so he tried it himself. In fact, he had never lost confidence in his powers of making himself understood. It was still a fixed conviction of his that in cases of necessity any intelligent man could make his wants known to intelligent foreigners. If not, there is stupidity somewhere. Had he not done so in Paris and in other places?

So he rang and managed to make the servant understand that he wished to see the landlady. The landlady had always shown a great admiration for the manly, not to say gigantic charms of the Senator. Upon him she bestowed her brightest smile, and the quick flush on her face and heaving breast told that the Senator had made wild work with her too susceptible heart.

So now when she learned that the Senator wished to see her, she at once imagined the cause to be any thing and every thing except the real one. Why take that particular time, when all the rest were out? she thought. Evidently for some tender purpose. Why send for her? Why not come down to see her? Evidently because he did not like the publicity of her room at the Conciergerie.

She arrayed herself, therefore, in her brightest and her best charms; gave an additional flourish to her dark hair that hung wavingly and

THE SENATOR IN A SAD PLIGHT.

luxuriantly, and still without a trace of gray over her forehead; looked at herself with her dark eyes in the glass to see if she appeared to the best advantage; and finally, in some agitation, but with great eagerness, she went to obey the summons.

Meantime the Senator had been deliberating how to begin. He felt that he could not show his bundle of clothes to so fair and fine a creature as this, whose manners were so soft and whose smile so pleasant. He would do any thing first. He would try a roundabout way of making known his wishes, trusting to his own powers and the intelligence of the lady for a full and complete understanding. Just as he had come to this conclusion there was a timid knock at the door.

"Come in," said the Senator, who began to feel a little awkward already.

"*E permesso?*" said a soft sweet voice, "*se puo entrare?*" and Signora Mirandolina Rocca advanced into the room, giving one look at the Senator, and then casting down her eyes.

"*Umilissima serva di Lei, Signore, mi commandi.*"

But the Senator was in a quandary. What could he do? How begin? What gesture would be the most fitting for a beginning?

The pause began to be embarrassing. The lady, however, as yet was calm—calmer, in fact, than when she entered.

So she spoke once more.

"*Di che ha Ella bisogna, Illustris simo?*"

The Senator was dreadfully embarrassed. The lady was so fair in his eyes. Was this a woman who could contemplate the fact of soiled linen? Never.

"Ehem!" said he.

The lady paused.

"*Serva devota,*" said Signora Mirandolina. "*Che c'e, Signore.*"

Then looking up, she saw the face of the Senator all rosy red, turned toward her, with a strange confusion and embarrassment in his eye, yet it was a kind eye—a soft, kind eye.

"*Egli e forse innamorato di me,*" murmured the lady, gathering new courage as she saw the timidity of the other. "*Che grandezza!*" she continued, loud enough for the Senator to hear, yet speaking as if to herself. "*Che bellezza! un galantuomo, certamente—e quest' e molto piacevole.*"

She glanced at the manly figure of the Senator with a tender admiration in her eye which she could not repress, and which was so intelligible to the Senator that he blushed more violently than ever, and looked helplessly around him.

"*E innamorato di me, senza dubio,*" said the Signora, "*vergogna non vuol che si sapesse.*"

The Senator at length found voice. Advancing toward the lady he looked at her very earnestly and as she thought very piteously—held out both his hands, then smiled, then spread his hands apart, then nodded and smiled again, and said—

"Me—me—want—ha—hum—ah! You know—me—gentleman—hum—me——Confound the luck," he added, in profound vexation.

"*Signore,*" said Mirandolina, "*la di Lei gentilezza mi confonde.*"

The Senator turned his eyes all around, everywhere, in a desperate half-conscious search for escape from an embarrassing situation.

"*Signore noi ci siamo sole, nessuno ci senti,*" remarked the Signora, encouragingly.

"Me want to tell you this!" burst forth the Senator. "Clothes—you know—washy—washy." Whereupon he elevated his eyebrows, smiled, and brought the tips of his fingers together.

"*Io non so che cosa vuol dir mi. Illustrissimo,* said the Signora, in bewilderment.

"You—you—you know. Ah? Washy? Hey? No, no," shaking his head, "not washy, but *get* washy."

The landlady smiled. The Senator, encouraged by this, came a step nearer.

"*Che cosa? Il cuor me palpita. Io tremo,*" murmured La Rocca.

She retreated a step. Whereupon the Senator at once fell back again in great confusion.

"Washy, washy," he repeated, mechanically, as his mind was utterly vague and distrait.

"*Uassi-Uuassi?*" repeated the other, interrogatively.

"Me—"

"*Tu,*" said she, with tender emphasis.

"Wee mounscer," said he, with utter desperation.

The Signora shook her head. "*Non capisco. Ma quelle, balordaggini ed intormentimente, che sono si non segni manifesti d'amorè?*"

"I don't understand, marm, a single word of that."

The Signora smiled. The Senator took courage again.

"The fact is this, marm," said he, firmly, "I want to get my clothes washed somewhere. Of course you don't do it, but you can tell me, you know. Hm?"

"*Non capisco.*"

"Madame," said he, feeling confident that she would understand that word at least, and thinking, too, that it might perhaps serve as a key to explain any other words which he might append to it. "My clothes—I want to get them washed—laundress—washy—soap and water—clean 'em all up—iron 'em—hang 'em out to dry. Ha?"

While saying this he indulged in an expressive pantomime. When alluding to his clothes he placed his hands against his chest, when mentioning the drying of them he waved them in the air. The landlady comprehended this. How not? When a gentleman places his hand on his heart, what is his meaning?

"*O sottigliezza d'amore!*" murmured she. "*Che cosa cerca,*" she continued, looking up timidly but invitingly.

The Senator felt doubtful at this, and in fact

THE SENATOR IN A WORSE FIX.

a little frightened. Again he placed his hands on his chest to indicate his clothes; he struck that manly chest forcibly several times, looking at her all the time. Then he wrung his hands.

"*Ah, Signore,*" said La Rocca, with a melting glance, "*non è d'uopo di desperazione.*"

"Washy, washy—"

"*Eppure, se Ella vuol spiegarmi, non ce difficolta,*" returned the other, with true Italian frankness.

"Soap and water—"

"*Non ho il coraggio di dir di no.*"

The Senator had his arms outstretched to indicate the hanging-out process. Still, however, feeling doubtful if he were altogether understood, he thought he would try another form of pantomime. Suddenly he fell down on his knees, and began to imitate the action of a washer-woman over her tub, washing, wringing, pounding, rubbing.

"*O gran' cielo!*" cried the Signora, her pitying heart filled with tenderness at the sight of this noble being on his knees before her, and, as she thought, wringing his hands in despair. "*O gran' cielo! Egli è innamorato di me non puo parlar Italiano e cosi non puo dirmelo.*"

Her warm heart prompted her, and she obeyed its impulse. What else could she do? She flung herself into his outstretched arms, as he raised himself to hang out imaginary clothes on an invisible line.

The Senator was thunderstruck, confounded, bewildered, shattered, overcome, crushed, stupefied, blasted, overwhelmed, horror-stricken, wonder-smitten, annihilated, amazed, horrified, shocked, frightened, terrified, nonplused, wilted, awe-struck, shivered, astounded, dumbfounded. He did not even struggle. He was paralyzed.

"*Ah, carissimo,*" said a soft and tender voice in his ear, a low, sweet voice, "*se veramenta me ami, sarò lo tua carissima sposa—*"

At that moment the door opened and Buttons walked in. In an instant he darted out. The Signora hurried away.

"*Addio, bellissima, carissima gioja!*" she sighed.

The Senator was still paralyzed.

After a time he went with a pale and anxious face to see Buttons. That young man promised secrecy and when the Senator was telling his story tried hard to look serious and sympathetic. In vain. The thought of that

scene, and the cause of it, and the blunder that had been made overwhelmed him. Laughter convulsed him. At last the Senator got up indignantly and left the room.

But what was he to do now? The thing could not be explained. How could he get out of the house? He would have to pass her as she sat at the door.

He had to call on Buttons again and implore his assistance. The difficulty was so repugnant, and the matter so very delicate, that Buttons declared he could not take the responsibility of settling it. It would have to be brought before the Club.

The Club had a meeting about it, and many plans were proposed. The stricken Senator had one plan, and that prevailed. It was to leave Rome on the following day. For his part he had made up his mind to leave the house at once. He would slip out as though he intended to return, and the others could settle his bill and bring with them the clothes that had caused all this trouble. He would meet them in the morning outside the gate of the city.

This resolution was adopted by all, and the Senator, leaving money to settle for himself, went away. He passed hurriedly out of the door. He dared not look. He heard a soft voice pronounce the word "*Gioja!*" He fled.

Now that one who owned the soft voice afterward changed her feelings so much toward her "gioja" that opposite his name in her house-book she wrote the following epithets: *Birbone, Villano, Zolicaccio, Burberone, Gaglioffo, Meschino, Briconaccio, Anemalaccio.*

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Rome.—Ancient History.—THE PREHISTORIC ERA.—CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF NIEBUHR AND HIS SCHOOL.—THE EARLY HISTORY OF ROME PLACED ON A RIGHT BASIS.—EXPLANATION OF HISTORY OF REPUBLIC.—NAPOLEON'S "CÆSAR."—THE IMPERIAL REGIME.—THE NORTHERN BARBARIANS.—RISE OF THE PAPACY.—MEDIÆVAL ROME.

Topography.—TRUE ADJUSTMENT OF BOUNDS OF ANCIENT CITY.—ITS PROBABLE POPULATION.—*Geology.*—EXAMINATION OF FORMATION.—TUFA TRAVERTINE.—ROMAN CEMENT.—TERRA-COTTA.—*Special consideration of Roman Catacombs.*—BOSIO.—ARRINGHI.—CARDINAL WISEMAN.—RECENT EXPLORATIONS, INVESTIGATIONS, EXAMINATIONS, EXHUMATIONS, AND RESUSCITATIONS.—EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY SET ON A TRUE BASIS.—RELICS.—MARTYRS.—REAL ORIGIN OF CATACOMBS.—TRUE AND RELIABLE EXTENT (WITH MAPS).

Remarks on Art.—THE RENAISSANCE.—THE EARLY PAINTERS: CIMABUE, GIOTTO, PERUGINO, RAFAELLE SANZIO, MICHELANGELO BUONAROTTI.—THE TRANSFIGURATION.—THE MOSES OF MICHELANGELO.—BELLINI.—SAINT PETER'S, AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE COLONNADE.—THE LAST JUDGMENT.—DANTE.—THE MEDIÆVAL SPIRIT.—EFFECT OF GOTHIC ART ON ITALY AND ITALIAN TASTE.—COMPARISON OF LOMBARD WITH SICILIAN CHURCHES.—TO WHAT EXTENT ROME INFLUENCED THIS DEVELOPMENT.—THE FOSTERING SPIRIT OF THE CHURCH.—ALL MODERN ART CHRISTIAN.—WHY THIS WAS A NECESSITY.—FOLLIES OF MODERN CRITICS.—REYNOLDS AND RUSKIN.—HOW FAR POPULAR TASTE IS WORTH ANY THING.—CONCLUDING REMARKS OF A MISCELLANEOUS DESCRIPTION.

[There! as a bill of fare I flatter myself that the above ought to take the eye. It was my intention, on the departure of the Club from Rome, to write a chapter of a thoroughly exhaustive character, as will be seen by the table of contents above; but afterward, finding that the chapter had already reached the dimensions of a good-sized book before a quarter of it was written, I thought that if it were inserted in this work it would be considered by some as too long; in fact, if it were admitted nothing more would ever be heard of the Dodge Club; which would be a great pity, as the best of their adventures did not take place until after this period; and as this is the real character of the present work, I have finally decided to enlarge the chapter into a book, which I will publish after I have given to the world my "History of the Mimes," "Treatise on the Greek Particles," "Course of Twelve Lectures on Modern History," new edition of the "Agamemnonian Triology" of Æschylus, with new readings, "Harmony of Greek Accent and Prosody," "Exercises in Sanscrit for Beginners, on the Ollendorf System," "The Odyssey of Homer translated into the Dublin Irish dialect," "Dissertation on the Symbolical Nature of the Mosaic Economy," "Elements of Logic," "Examination into the Law of Neutrals," "Life of General George Washington," "History of Patent Medicines," "Transactions of the 'Saco Association for the advancement of Human Learning, particularly Natural Science' (consisting of one article written by myself on 'The Toads of Maine')," and "Report of the 'Kennebunkport, Maine, United Congregational Ladies' Benevolent City Missionary and Mariners' Friend Society,'" which will all be out some of these days, I don't know exactly when; but after they come out this chapter will appear in book form. And if any of my readers prefer to wait till they read that chapter before reading any further, all I can say is, perhaps they'd better not, as after all it has no necessary connection with the fortunes of the Dodge Club.]

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ITALIAN TRAVEL, ROADS, INNS.—A GRAND BREAKDOWN.—AN ARMY OF BEGGARS.—SIX MEN HUNTING UP A CARRIAGE WHEEL; AND PLANS OF THE SENATOR FOR THE GOOD OF ITALY.

On the following morning the Senator was picked up at the gate, where he had waited patiently ever since the dawn of day. His seat was secured. His friends were around him. He was safe. They rolled on merrily all that day. And their carriage was ahead of that of the Spaniards. They stopped at the same inns. Buttons was happy.

The next day came. At nine o'clock A.M. on the next day there was a singular scene:

A vettura with the fore-wheel crushed into fragments; two horses madly plunging; five men thrown in different directions on a soft sand-bank; and a driver gazing upon the scene with a face of woe.

The Senator tried most energetically to brush the dust from his clothes with an enormous red silk handkerchief; the Doctor and Mr. Figgs looked aghast at huge rents in their nether garments; Buttons and Dick picked themselves up and hurried to the wreck.

The emotions of the former may be conceived. The wheel was an utter smash. No patching however thorough, no care however tender, could place it on its edge again a perfect wheel. A hill rose before them, behind which the Spaniards, hitherto their companions, had disappeared half an hour previously, and were now rolling on over

the palin beyond that hill all ignorant of this disaster. Every moment separated them more widely from the despairing Buttons. Could he have metamorphosed himself into a wheel most gladly would he have done it. He had wild thoughts of setting off on foot and catching up to them before the next day. But, of course, further reflection showed him that walking was out of the question.

Dick looked on in silence. They were little more than a day's journey from Rome. Civita Castellana lay between; yet perhaps a wheel might not be got at Civita Castellana. In that case a return to Rome was inevitable. What a momentous thought! Back to Rome! Ever since he left he had felt a profound melancholy. The feeling of homesickness was on him. He had amused himself with keeping his eyes shut and fancying that he was moving to Rome instead of from it. He had repented leaving the city. Better, he thought, to have waited. He might then have seen Pepita. The others gradually came to survey the scene.

"Eh? Well, what's to be done now?" said Buttons, sharply, as the driver came along. "How long are you going to wait?"

"Signore makes no allowance for a poor man's confusion. Behold that wheel! What is there for me to do—unhappy? May the bitter curse of the ruined fall upon that miserable wheel!"

"The conch has already fallen on it," said Dick. "Surely that is enough."

"It infuriates me to find myself overthrown here."

"You could not wish for a better place, my Pietro."

"What will you do?" said Buttons. "We must not waste time here. Can we go on?"

"How is that possible?"

"We might get a wheel at the next town."

"We could not find one if we hunted all through the three next towns."

"Curse your Italian towns!" cried Buttons, in a rage.

"Certainly, Signore, curse them if you desire."

"Where can we get this one repaired then?"

"At Civita Castellana, I hope."

"Back there! What, go back!"

"I am not to blame," said Pietro, with resignation.

"We must not go back. We shall not."

"If we go forward every mile will make it worse. And how can we move with this load and this broken wheel up that hill?"

That was indeed a difficulty. The time that had elapsed since the lamentable break-down had been sufficient to bring upon the scene an inconceivable crowd. After satisfying their curiosity they betook themselves to business.

Ragged, dirty, evil-faced, wicked-eyed, slouching, whining, impudent—seventeen wom-

TRAVELLING IN ITALY.

en, twenty-nine small boys, and thirty-one men, without counting curs and goats.

"Signo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o! in the name of the Ever Blessed, and for the love of Heaven." "Go to thunder." "For the love of." "We have nothing, *nothing*, NOTHING! Do you hear?" "Of the Virgin." "Away! Be off." "Give me." "Go to blazes!" "Me miserable." "Will you be off?" "Infirm, blind, and." "I'll break your skull!" "Altogether desperate." "If you torment us any more, I'll." "Only the smallest charity." "Smash your abominable bottle-nose!" "Oh, generous nobles!" "Don't press me, you filthy." "Illustrious cavaliers!" "Take that! and if you say any more I'll kick you harder." "I kneel before you, oppressed, wretched, starving. Let these tears." "I'll make you shed more of them if you don't clear out." "N-n-n- Signo-o-o-o-o!" "Away!" "Behold a wretched villager from the far distant Ticino!" "You be hanged! Keep off!" "Oh, Signo-o-o-o-o! Oh per l'amor di Dio! Carita! Carita-a-a-a —solamente un mezzo barocchio—oh, Signo-o-o! —datemi."

"Pietro! Pietro! for Heaven's sake get us out of this at once. Anywhere — anywhere, so that we can escape from these infernal vagabonds!"

The result was, that Pietro turned his carriage round. By piling the baggage well behind, and watching the fore-axle carefully, he contrived to move the vehicle along. Behind them followed the pertinacious beggars, filling the air with prayers, groans, sighs, cries, tears, lamentations, appeals, wailings, and entreaties. Thus situated they made their entry into Civita Castellana.

Others might have felt flattered at the reception that awaited them. They only felt annoyed. The entire city turned out. The main street up which they passed was quite full. The side-streets showed people hurrying up to the principal thoroughfare. They were the centre of all eyes. Through the windows of the café the round eyes of the citizens were visible on the broad stare. Even the dogs and cats had a general turn out.

Nor could they seek relief in the seclusion of the hotel. The anxiety which all felt to resume their journey did not allow them to rest. They at once explored the entire city.

Was there a carriage-maker in the place? A half-hour's search showed them that there was not one. The next thing then was to try and find a wheel. About this they felt a little hopeful. Strange, indeed, if so common a thing as this could not be obtained.

Yet strange as this might be it was even so. No wheel was forthcoming. They could not find a carriage even. There was nothing but two ancient calèches, whose wheels were not only rickety but utterly disproportioned to the size of the vettura, and any quantity of bullock carts, which moved on contrivances that could scarcely be called wheels at all.

Three hours were consumed in the tedious search. The entire body of the inhabitants became soon aware of the object of their desires, and showed how truly sympathetic is the Italian nature, by accompanying them wherever they went, and making observations that were more sprightly than agreeable.

At first the Club kept together, and made their search accompanied by Pietro; but after a time the crowd became so immense that they separated, and continued their search singly. This produced but slight improvement. The crowd followed their example. A large number followed the Senator: walking when he walked; stopping when he stopped; turning when he turned; strolling when he strolled; peering when he peered; commenting when he spoke, and making themselves generally very agreeable and delightful.

At every corner the tall form of the Senator might be seen as he walked swiftly with the long procession following like a tail of a comet; or as he stopped at times to look around in despair, when

> "He above the rest
> In shape and gesture proudly eminent
> Stood like a tower. His form had not yet lost
> All its original brightness;"

although, to tell the truth, his clothes had, and the traces of mud and dust somewhat dimmed the former lustre of his garments.

The appalling truth at last forced itself upon them that Civita Castellana could not furnish them either with a new wheel or a blacksmith who could repair the broken one. Whether the entire mechanical force of the town had gone off to the wars or not they did not stop to inquire. They believed that the citizens had combined to disappoint them, in hopes that their detention might bring in a little ready money and start it in circulation around the community.

It was at last seen that the only way to do was to send Pietro back to Rome. To delay any longer would be only a waste of time. Slowly and sadly they took up their quarters at the hotel. Dick decided to go back so as to hasten Pietro, who might otherwise loiter on the way. So the dilapidated carriage had to set out on its journey backward.

Forced to endure the horrors of detention in one of the dullest of Italian towns, their situation was deplorable. Mr. Figgs was least unhappy, for he took to his bed and slept through the entire period, with the exception of certain intervals which he devoted to meals. The Doctor sat quietly by an upper window playing the devil's tattoo on the ledge with inexhaustible patience.

The Senator strolled through the town. He found much to interest him. His busy brain was filled with schemes for the improvement of the town.

How town lots could be made valuable; how strangers could be attracted; how manufactures could be promoted; how hotels started;

THE SENATOR'S ESCORT.

how shops imported; how trade increased; how the whole surrounding population enriched, especially by [illegible] factories.

"Why, among these here hills," said he, confidentially, to Buttons—"among these very hills there is water-power and excellent location for, say—Silk-weaving mills, Fulling ditto, Grist ditto, Carding ditto, Sawing ditto, Plaster-crushing ditto, Planing ditto.—Now I would locate a cotton-mill over there."

"Where would you get your cotton?" mumbled Buttons.

"Where?" repeated the Senator. "Grow it on the Campagna, of course."

Buttons passed the time in a fever of impatience.

For far ahead the Spaniards were flying further and further away, no doubt wondering at every stage why he did not join them.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

TRIUMPHANT PROGRESS OF DICK.—GENDARMES FOILED.—THE DODGE CLUB IS ATTACKED BY BRIGANDS, AND EVERY MAN OF IT COVERS HIMSELF WITH GLORY.—SCREAM OF THE AMERICAN EAGLE!

It was late on the evening of the following day before Dick made his appearance with Pietro. Another vettura had been obtained, and with cracks of a long whip that resounded through the whole town, summoning the citizens to the streets; with thunder of wheels over the pavements; with prancing and snorting of horses; Pietro drove up to the hotel. Most conspicuous in the turn-out was Dick, who was seated in the coupé, waving his hat triumphantly in the air.

The appearance of the carriage was the signal for three hearty cheers, which burst involuntarily from the three Americans on the court-yard, rousing Mr. Figgs from sleep and the inn-keeper from his usual lethargy. One look at the horses was enough to show that there was no chance of proceeding further that day. The poor beasts were covered with foam, and trembled excessively. However, they all felt infinite relief at the prospect of getting away, even though they would have to wait till the following morning.

Dick was dragged to the dining-room by his eager friends and fiercely interrogated. He had not much to tell.

The journey to Rome had been made without any difficulty, the carriage having tumbled forward on its front axle not more than one hundred and fifty-seven times. True, when it reached Rome it was a perfect wreck, the framework being completely wrenched to pieces; and the proprietor was bitterly enraged with Pietro for not leaving the carriage at Civita Castellana, and returning on horseback for a wheel; but Dick interceded for the poor devil of a driver, and the proprietor kindly consented to deduct the value of the coach from his wages piecemeal.

Their journey back was quick but uninteresting. Dick acknowledged that he had a faint idea of staying in Rome, but saw a friend who advised him not to. He had taken the reins and driven for a great part of the way, while Pietro had gone inside and slumbered the sleep of the just.

As it was a lonely country, with few inhabitants, he had beguiled the tedious hours of the journey by blowing patriotic airs on an enormous trombone, purchased by him from a miscellaneous dealer in Rome. The result had been in the highest degree pleasing to himself, though perhaps a little surprising to others. No one, however, interfered with him except a party of gendarmes who attempted to stop him. They thought that he was a Garibaldino trying to rouse the country. The trombone might have been the cause of that suspicion.

Fortunately the gendarmes, though armed to the teeth, were not mounted, and so it was that, when they attempted to arrest Dick, that worthy man lashed his horses to fury, and, loosening the reins at the same moment, burst through the line, and before they knew what he was about he was away.

They fired a volley. The echoes died away, mingled with gendarmerian curses. The only harm done was a hole made by a bullet through the coach. The only apparent effect was the waking of Pietro. That worthy, suddenly roused from slumber, jumped up [illegible] hear the last sounds of the rifles, to see the hole made

DICK IN HIS GLORY.

by the bullet, the fading forms of the frantic officials, and the nimble figure of the gallant driver, who stood upright upon the seat waving his hat over his head, while the horses dashed on at a furious gallop.

This was all. Nothing more occurred, for Pietro drove the remainder of the way, and Dick's trombone was tabooed.

On the following morning the welcome departure was made. To their inexpressible joy they found that the coach was this time a strong one, and no ordinary event of travel could delay them. They had lost two days, however, and that was no trifle. They now entered upon the second stage, and passed on without difficulty,

In fact, they didn't meet with a single incident worth mentioning till they came to Perugia. Perugia is one of the finest places in Italy, and really did not deserve to be overhauled so terrifically by the Papal troops. Every body remembers that affair. At the time when the Dodge Club arrived at this city they found the Papal party in the middle of a reaction. They actually began to fear that they had gone a little too far. They were making friendly overtures to the outraged citizens. But the latter were implacable, stiff!

What rankled most deeply was the maddening fact that these Swiss, who were made the ministers of vengeance, were part of that accursed, detested, hated, shunned, despised, abhorred, loathed, execrated, contemptible, stupid, thick-headed, brutal, gross, cruel, bestial, demoniacal, fiendish, and utterly abominable race—*I Tedeschi*—whose very name, when hissed from an Italian mouth, expresses unutterable scorn and undying hate.

They left Perugia at early dawn. Jogging on easily over the hills, they were calculating the time when they would reach Florence.

In the disturbed state of Italy at this time, resulting from war and political excitement, and general expectation of universal change, the country was filled with disorder, and scoundrels infested the roads, particularly in the Papal territories. Here the Government, finding sufficient employment for all its energies in taking care of itself, could scarcely be expected to take care either of its own subjects or the traveller through its dominions. The Americans had heard several stories about brigands, but had given themselves no trouble whatever about them.

Now it came to pass that about five miles from Perugia they wound round a very thickly-wooded mountain, which ascended on the left far above, and on the right descended quite abruptly into a gorge. Dick was outside; the others inside. Suddenly a loud shout, and a scream from Pietro. The carriage stopped.

The inside passengers could see the horses rearing and plunging, and Dick, snatching whip and reins from Pietro, lashing them with all his might. In a moment all inside was in an uproar.

"We are attacked!" cried Buttons.

"The devil!" cried the Senator, who, in his sudden excitement, used the first and only profane expression which his friends ever heard him utter.

Out came the Doctor's revolver.

Bang! bang! went two rifles outside, and a loud voice called on them to surrender.

"*Andate al Diavolo!*" pealed out Dick's voice as loud as a trumpet. His blows fell fast and furiously on the horses. Maddened by pain, the animals bounded forward for a few rods, and then swerving from the road-side, dashed against the precipitous hill, where the coach stuck, the horses rearing.

Through the doors which they had flung open in order to jump out the occupants of the carriage saw the reeling figures of armed men overthrown and cursing. In a moment they all were out.

Bang! and then——

Ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-bang! went half a dozen rifles.

Thank Heaven! not one of the Club was

struck. There were twenty scoundrels armed to the teeth.

The Doctor was as stiff as a rock. He aimed six times as calmly as though he were in a pistol-gallery. Nerve told. Six explosions roared. Six yells followed. Six men reeled.

"I'd give ten years of my life for such a pistol!" cried Buttons.

The Italians were staggered. Dick had a bowie-knife. The Senator grasped a ponderous beam that he had placed on the coach in case of another break-down. Mr. Figgs had a razor which he had grabbed from the store-house in the Doctor's pocket. Buttons had nothing. But on the road lay three Italians writhing.

"Hurrah!" cried Buttons. "Load again, Doctor. Come; let's make a rush and get the guns of these devils on the road."

He rushed forward. The others all at his side. The Italians stood paralyzed at the effect of the revolver. As Buttons led the charge they fell back a few paces.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" burst from Buttons, the Senator, and Dick, as each snatched a rifle from the prostrate bandits, and hastily tore the cartridge-boxes from them.

"Load up! load up! Doctor!" cried Buttons.

"All right," said the Doctor, who never changed in his cool self-possession.

But now the Italians with curses and screams came back to the attack. It is absolutely stupefying to think how few shots hit the mark in the excitement of a fight. Here were a number of men firing from a distance of hardly more than forty paces, and not one took effect.

The next moment the whole crowd were upon them. Buttons snatched Mr. Figgs's razor from his grasp and used it vigorously. Dick plied his bowie-knife. The Senator wielded a clubbed rifle on high as though it were a wand, and dealt the blows of a giant upon the heads of his assailants. All the Italians were physically their inferiors—small, puny men. Mr. Figgs made a wild dash at the first man he saw and seized his rifle. The fight was spirited.

The rascally brigands were nearly three times as numerous, but the Americans surpassed them in bodily strength and spirit.

Crash—crash—fell the Senator's rifle, and down went two men. His strength was enormous—absorbed as it had been from the granite cliffs of the old Granite State. Two brawny fellows seized him from behind. A thrust of his elbow laid one low. Buttons slashed the wrist of the other. A fellow threw himself on Buttons. Dick's bowie-knife laid open his arm and thigh. The next moment Dick went down beneath the blows of several Italians. But Buttons rushed with his razor to rescue Dick. These men glared at him with uplifted weapons. Down came the Senator's clubbed rifle like an avalanche, sweeping their weapons over the cliff. They turned simultaneously on the Senator, and grasped him in a threefold embrace. Buttons's razor again drank blood. Two turned upon him. Bang! went the Doctor's pistol, sending one of them shrieking to the ground. Bang! once more, and a fellow who had nearly overpowered the breathless Figgs staggered back. Dick was writhing on the ground beneath the weight of a dead man and a fellow who was trying to suffocate him. Buttons was being throttled by three others who held him powerless, his razor being broken. A crack on Mr. Figgs's head laid him low. The Doctor stood off at a little distance hastily reloading.

The Senator alone was free; but six fierce fellows assailed him. It was now as in the old Homeric days, when the heroic soul, sustained by iron nerve and mighty muscle, came out particularly strong in the hour of conflict.

The Senator's form towered up like one of his own granite cliffs in the storm—as rugged, as unconquerable. His blood was up! The same blood it was that coursed through the veins of Cromwell's grim old "Ironsides," and afterward animated those sturdy backwoodsmen who had planted themselves in American forests, and beaten back wild beasts and howling savages.

Buttons, prostrate on the ground, looked up, gasping through the smoke and dust, as he struggled with his assailants. He saw the Senator, his hair bristling out straight, his teeth set, his eye on fire, his whole expression sublimed by the ardor of battle. His clothes were torn to shreds; his coat was gone, his hat nowhere, his hands and face were covered with clots of blood and streaks from mud, dust, smoke, and powder.

The eye of Buttons took in all this in one glance. The next instant, with a wide sweep of his clubbed rifle the Senator put forth all his gigantic strength in one tremendous effort. The shock was irresistible. Down went the six bandits as though a cannon-ball had struck them. The Senator leaped away to relieve Dick, and seizing his assailant by neck and heel, flung him over the cliff. Then tearing away another from Mr. Figgs's prostrate and almost senseless form, he rushed back upon the six men whom he had just levelled to the earth

Dick sprang to the relief of Buttons, who was at his last extremity. But the Doctor was before him, as cool as ever. He grasped one fellow by the throat—a favorite trick of the Doctor's, in which his anatomical knowledge came very finely into play.

"Off!" rang the Doctor's voice.

The fellow gasped a curse. The next instant a roar burst through the air, and the wretch fell heavily forward, shot through the head, while his brains were spattered over the face of Buttons. The Doctor with a blow of his fist sent the other fellow reeling over.

Buttons sprang up gasping. The Italians were falling back. He called to the Senator. That man of might came up. Thank God,

they were all alive! Bruised, and wounded, and panting—but alive.

The scowling bandits drew off, leaving seven of their number on the road *hors de combat*. Some of the retreating ones had been badly treated, and limped and staggered. The Club proceeded to load their rifles.

The Doctor stepped forward. Deliberately aiming he fired his revolver five times in rapid succession. Before he had time to load again the bandits had darted into the woods.

"Every one of those bullets *hit*," said the Doctor with unusual emphasis,

"We must get under cover at once," said Dick. "They'll be back shortly with others!"

"Then we must fortify our position," said the Senator, "and wait for relief. As we were, though, it was lucky they tried a hand-to-hand fight first. This hill shelters us on one side. There are so many trees that they can't roll stones down, nor can they shoot us. We'll fix a barricade in front with our baggage. We'll have to fight behind a barricade this time; though, by the Eternal! I wish it were hand-to-hand again, for I don't remember of ever having had such a glorious time in all my born days!"

The Senator passed his hand over his gory brow, and walked to the coach.

"Where's Pietro?"

"Pietro! *Pietro!*"

No answer.

"Pi-e-tro!"

Still no answer.

"Pietro!" cried Dick, "if you don't come here I'll blow your—"

"Oh! is it you, Signori?" exclaimed Pietro's voice; and that worthy appeared among the trees a little way up the hill. He was deadly pale, and trembled so much that he could scarcely speak.

"Look here!" cried Buttons; "we are going to barricade ourselves."

"Barricade!"

"We can not carry our baggage away, and we are not going to leave it behind. We expect to have another battle."

Pietro's face grew livid.

"You can stay and help us if you wish."

Pietro's teeth chattered.

"Or you can help us far more by running to the nearest town and letting the authorities know."

"Oh, Signore, trust me! I go."

"Make haste, then, or you may find us all murdered, and then how will you get your fares—eh?"

"I go—I go; I will run all the way!"

"Won't you take a gun to defend yourself with?"

"Oh no!" cried Pietro, with horror. "No, no!"

In a few minutes he had vanished among the thick woods.

After stripping the prostrate Italians the travellers found themselves in possession of seven rifles, with cartridges, and some other useful articles. Four of these men were stone-dead. They pulled their bodies in front of their place of shelter. The wounded men they drew inside, and the Doctor at once attended to them, while the others were strengthening the barricade.

PIETRO.

"I don't like putting these here," said the Senator; "but it'll likely frighten the brigands, or make them delicate about firing at us. That's my idea."

The horses were secured fast. Then the baggage was piled all around, and made an excellent barricade. With this and the captured rifles they felt themselves able to encounter a small regiment.

"Now let them come on," cried the Senator, "just as soon as they damn please! We'll try first the European system of barricades; and if that don't work, then we can fall back on the real original, national, patriotic, independent, manly, native American, true-blue, and altogether heroic style!"

"What is that?"

The Senator looked at the company, and held out his clenched fist:

"Why, from behind a tree, in the woods, like your glorious forefathers!"

THE BARRICADE.

CHAPTER XL.

PLEASANT MEDITATIONS ABOUT THE WONDERS OF TOBACCO; AND THREE PLEASANT ANECDOTES BY AN ITALIAN BRIGAND.

A PULL apiece at the brandy-flask restored strength and freshness to the beleaguered travellers, who now, intrenched behind their fortifications, awaited any attack which the Italians might choose to make.

"The *I*-talians," said the Senator, "are not a powerful race. By no means. Feeble in body—no muscle—no brawn. Above all, no real *pluck*. Buttons, is there a word in their language that expresses the exact idee of *pluck*?"

"No."

"Or *game*?"

"No."

"Or even *spunk*?"

"No."

"I thought not," said the Senator, calmly. "They haven't the *idee*, and can't have the word. Now, it would require a rather considerable crowd to demolish us at the present time."

"How long will we have to stay here?" asked Mr. Figgs abruptly.

"My dear Sir," said Buttons, with more sprightliness than he had shown for many days, "be thankful that you are here at all. We'll get off some time to-day. These fellows are watching us, and the moment we start they'll fire on us. We would be a good mark for them in the coach. No, we must wait awhile."

Seated upon the turf, they gave themselves up to the pleasing influence that flows from the pipe. Is there any thing equal to it? How did the ancients contrive to while away the time without it? Had they known its effects how they would have cherished it! We should now be gazing upon the ruins of venerable temples, reared by adoring votaries to the goddess Tabaca. Boys at school would have construed passages about her. Lempriere, Smith, Anthon, Drissler, and others would have done honor to her. Classic mythology would have been full of her presence. Olympian Jove would have been presented to us with this divinity as his constant attendant, and a nimbus around his immortal brows of her making. Bacchus would have had a rival, a superior!

Poets would have told how TABACA went over the world girt in clouds that but set off the more her splendid radiance. We should have known how much Bacchus had to do with *τὰ Βακχεια*; a chapter which will probably be a lost one in the History of Civilization. But that he who smokes should drink beer is quite indisputable. Whether the beer is to be X, XX, XXX; or whether the brewer's name should begin with an A, as in Alsopp, and run through the whole alphabet, ending with V, as in Vassar, may be fairly left to individual consideration.

What noble poetry, what spirited odes, what eloquent words, has not the world lost by the ignorance of Greek and Roman touching this plant?

The above remarks were made by Dick on this occasion. But Buttons was talking with the wounded Italians.

The Doctor had bound up their wounds and Buttons had favored them with a drop from his flask. Dick cut up some tobacco and filled a pipe for each. After all, the Italians were not fiends. They had attacked them not from malice, but purely from professional motives.

Yet, had their enemies been Tedeschi, no amount of attention would have overcome their sullen hate. But being Americans, gay, easy, without malice, in fact kind and rather agreeable, they softened, yielded altogether, and finally chatted familiarly with Buttons and Dick. They were young, not worse in appearance than the majority of men; perhaps not bad fellows in their social relations; at any rate, rather inclined to be jolly in their present circumstances. They were quite free in their expressions of admiration for the bravery of their captors, and looked with awe upon the Doctor's revolver, which was the first they had ever seen.

In fact, the younger prisoner became quite communicative. Thus:

"I was born in Velletri. My age is twenty-four years. I have never shed blood except three times. The first time was in Narni—odd place, Narni. My employer was a vine-dresser. The season was dry; the brush caught fire, I don't know how, and in five minutes a third of the vineyard was consumed to ashes. My employer came cursing and raving at me, and swore he'd make me work for him till I made good the loss. Enraged, I struck him. He seized an axe. I drew my stiletto, and — of course I had to run away.

"The second time was in Naples. The affair was brought about by a woman. Signore, women are at the bottom of most crimes that men commit. I was in love with her. A friend of mine fell in love with her too. I informed him that if he interfered with me I would kill him. I told her that if she encouraged him I would kill him and her too. I suppose she was piqued. Women will get piqued sometimes. At any rate she gave him marked encouragement. I scolded and threatened. No use. She told me she was tired of me; that I was too tyrannical. In fact, she dared to turn me off and take the other fellow. Maffeo was a good fellow. I was sorry for him, but I had to keep my word.

"The third time was only a month ago. I robbed a Frenchman, out of pure patriotism—the French, you know, are our oppressors—and kept what I found about him to reward me for my gallant act. The Government, however, did not look upon it in a proper light. They sent out a detachment to arrest me. I was caught, and by good fortune brought to an inn. At night I was bound tightly and shut up in the same room with the soldiers. The innkeeper's daughter, a friend of mine, came in for something, and by mere chance dropped a knife behind me. I got it, cut my cords, and when they were all asleep I departed. Before going I left the knife behind; and where now, Signore, do you think I left it?"

"I have no idea."

"You would never guess. You never would have thought of it yourself."

"Where did you leave it?"

"In the heart of the Captain."

CHAPTER XLI.

FINAL ATTACK OF REINFORCEMENTS OF BRIGANDS. —THE DODGE CLUB DEFIES THEM AND REPELS THEM.—HOW TO MAKE A BARRICADE. — FRATERNIZATION OF AMERICAN EAGLE AND GALLIC COCK.—THERE'S NOTHING LIKE LEATHER.

"It is certainly a singular position for an American citizen to be placed in," said the Senator. "To come from a cotton-mill to such a regular out-and-out piece of fighting as this. Yet it seems to me that fighting comes natural to the American blood."

"They've been very quiet for ever so long," said Mr. Figgs; "perhaps they've gone away."

"I don't believe they have, for two reasons. The first is, they are robbers, and want our money; the second, they are Italians, and want revenge. They won't let us off so easily after the drubbing we gave them."

Thus Buttons, and the others rather coincided in his opinion. For several miles further on the road ran through a dangerous place, where men might lurk in ambush, and pick them off like so many snipe. They rather enjoyed a good fight, but did not care about being regularly shot down. So they waited.

It was three in the afternoon. Fearfully hot, too, but not so bad as it might have been. High trees sheltered them. They could ruminate under the shade. The only difficulty was the want of food. What can a garrison do that is ill provided with eatables? The Doctor's little store of crackers and cheese was divided and eaten. A basket of figs and oranges followed. Still they were hungry.

"Well," said Dick, "there's one thing we can do if the worst comes to the worst."

"What's that?"

"Go through the forest in Indian file back to Perugia."

"That's all very well," said the Senator, stubbornly, "but we're not going back. No, Sir, not a step!"

"I'm tired of this," said Buttons, impatiently. "I'll go out as scout."

"I'll go too," said Dick.

"Don't go far, boys," said the Senator, in the tone of an anxious father.

"No, not very. That hill yonder will be a good lookout place."

"Yes, if you are not seen yourselves."

"We'll risk that. If we see any signs of these scoundrels, and find that they see us, we will fire to let you know. If we remain undiscovered we will come back quietly."

"Very well. But I don't like to let you go off alone, my boys; it's too much of an exposure."

"Nonsense."

"I have a great mind to go too."

"No, no, you had better stay to hold our place of retreat. We'll come back, you know."

"Very well, then."

The Senator sat himself down again, and Buttons and Dick vanished among the trees. An hour passed; the three in the barricade began to feel uneasy; the prisoners were asleep and snoring.

"Hang it," cried the Senator, "I wish I had gone with them!"

"Never fear," said the Doctor; "they are too nimble to be caught just yet. If they had been caught you'd have heard a little firing."

At that very moment the loud report of a rifle burst through the air, followed by a second; upon which a whole volley poured out. The three started to their feet.

"They are found!" cried the Senator. "It's about a mile away. Be ready!"

Mr. Figgs had two rifles by his side, and sat looking at the distance with knitted brows. He had received some terrific bruises in the late mêlée, but was prepared to fight till he died. He had said but little through the day. He was not talkative. His courage was of a quiet order. He felt the solemnity of the occasion. It was a little different from sitting at the head of a Board of bank directors, or shaving notes in a private office. At the end of about ten minutes there was a crackling among the bushes. Buttons and Dick came tumbling down into the road.

"Get ready! Quick! They're here!"

"All ready."

"All loaded?"

"Yes."

"We saw them away down the road, behind a grove of trees. We couldn't resist, and so fired at them. The whole band leaped up raving, and saw us, and fired. They then set off up the road to this place, thinking that we are divided. They're only a few rods away."

"How many are there of them?"

"Fourteen."

"They must have got some more. There were only ten able-bodied, unwounded men when they left."

"Less," said the Doctor; "my pistol—"

"H'st!"

At this moment they heard the noise of footsteps. A band of armed men came in sight. Halting cautiously, they examined the barricade. Bang! It was the Doctor's revolver. Down went one fellow, yelling. The rest were frantic. Like fools, they made a rush at the barricade.

Bang! a second shot, another wounded. A volley was the answer. Like fools, the brigands fired against the barricade. No damage was done. The barricade was too strong.

The answer to this was a withering volley from the Americans. The bandits reeled, staggered, fell back, shrieking, groaning, and cursing. Two men lay dead on the road. The others took refuge in the woods.

For two hours an incessant fire was kept up between the bandits in the woods and the Americans in their retreat. No damage was done on either side.

"Those fellows try so hard they almost deserve to lick us," said the Senator dryly.

Suddenly there came from afar the piercing blast of a trumpet.

"Hark!" cried Buttons.

Again.

A cavalry trumpet!

"They are horsemen!" cried Dick, who was holding his ear to the ground; and then added: "Ἵππων μ' ὠκυπόδων ἀμοὶ κτύπος οὔατα βάλλει."

"Hey?" cried the Senator; "water barley?"

Again the sound. A dead silence. All listening.

And now the tramp of horses was plainly heard. The firing had ceased altogether since the first blast of the trumpet. The bandits disappeared. The horsemen drew nearer, and were evidently quite numerous. At last they burst upon the scene, and the little garrison greeted them with a wild hurrah. They were French dragoons, about thirty in number. Prominent among them was Pietro, who at first stared wildly around, and then, seeing the Americans, gave a cry of joy.

The travellers now came out into the road, and quick and hurried greetings were interchanged. The commander of the troop, learning that the bandits had just left, sent off two-thirds of his men in pursuit, and remained with the rest behind.

Pietro had a long story to tell of his own doings. He had wandered through the forest till he came to Perugia. The commandant there listened to his story, but declined sending any of his men to the assistance of the travellers. Pietro was in despair. Fortunately a small detachment of French cavalry had just arrived at Perugia on their way to Rome, and the captain was more merciful. The gallant fellow at once set out, and, led by Pietro, arrived at the place most opportunely.

It did not take long to get the coach ready again. One horse was found to be so badly wounded that it had to be killed. The others were slightly hurt. The baggage and trunks were riddled with bullets. These were once more piled up, the wounded prisoners placed inside, and the travellers, not being able to get in all together, took turns in walking.

At the next town the prisoners were delivered up to the authorities. The travellers celebrated their victory by a grand banquet, to which they invited the French officer and the soldiers, who came on with them to this town. Uproar prevailed. The Frenchmen were exuberant in compliments to the gallantry of their entertainers. Toasts followed.

"The Emperor and President!"

"America and France!"

"Tricolor and stars!"

"The two countries intertwined!"

"A song, Dick!" cried the Senator, who al-

AN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIR.

ways liked to hear Dick sing. Dick looked modest.

"Strike up!"

"What?"

"The 'Scoodoo abscook!'" cried Mr Figgs.

"No; 'The Old Cow!'" cried Buttons.

"'The Fig by the Banks of the River?'" said the Doctor.

"Dick, don't," said the Senator. "I'll tell you an appropriate song. These Frenchmen believe in France. We believe in America. Each one thinks there is nothing like Leather. Sing 'Leather,' then."

FIGGS.
BUTTONS.
THE DOCTOR. } "Yes, 'Leather!'"

"Then let it be 'Leather,'" said Dick; and he struck up the following (which may not be obtained of any of the music publishers), to a very peculiar tune:

I.

"Mercury! Patron of melody,
Father of Music and Lord,
Thine was the skill that invented
Music's harmonious chord.
Sweet were the sounds that arose,
Sweetly they blended together;
Thus, in the ages of old,
Music arose out of—LEATHER!

[*Full Chorus by all the Company.*]
"Then Leather! sing Leather! my lads!
Mercury! Music!! and Leather!!!
Of all the things under the sun,
Hurrah! there is nothing like *Leather!*

[*Extra Chorus, descriptive of a Cobbler hammering on his Lapstone.*]
"Then Rub a dub, dub!
Rub a dub, dub!!
Rub a dub, dub!!! say we!

II.

"War is a wonderful science,
Mars was its patron, I'm told,
How did he used to accoutre
Armies in battles of old?
With casque, and with sling, and with shield,
With bow-string and breastplate together;
Thus, in the ages of old,
War was begun out of—LEATHER!

[*Chorus.*]
"Then Leather! sing Leather, my lads!
Mars and his weapons of Leather!
Of all the things under the sun,
Hurrah! there is nothing like *Leather!*

[*Extra Chorus.*]
"Rub a dub, dub!
Rub a dub, dub!!
Rub a dub, dub!!! say we!

III.

"Love is a pleasing emotion,
All of us know it by heart:
Whence, can you tell me, arises
Love's overpowering smart?
Tipped with an adamant barb,
Gracefully tufted with feather,
Love's irresistible dart
Comes from a quiver of—LEATHER!

[*Chorus.*]
"Then Leather! sing Leather, my lads!
Darts! and Distraction!! and Leather!!!
Of all the things under the sun,
Hurrah! there is nothing like *Leather!*

[*Extra Chorus.*]
"Rub a dub, dub!
Rub a dub, dub!!
Rub a dub, dub!!! say we!

IV.

"Orators wrote out their speeches,
Poets their verses recited,
Statesmen promulgated edicts,
Sages their maxims indited.

Parchment, my lads, was the article
All used to write on together;
Thus the Republic of Letters
Sprang into life out of—LEATHER.

[*Chorus.*]
"Then Leather! sing Leather, my lads!
Poetry! Science!! and Leather!!!
Of all the things under the sun,
Hurrah! there is nothing like *Leather!*

[*Extra Chorus.*]
"Rub a dub, dub!
Rub a dub, dub!!
Rub a dub, dub!!! say we!"

CHAPTER XLII.

FLORENCE.—DESPERATION OF BUTTONS, OF MR. FIGGS, AND OF THE DOCTOR.

FLORENCE, THE FAIR!—Certainly it is the fairest of cities. Beautiful for situation; the joy of the whole earth! It has a beauty that grows upon the heart. The Arno is the sweetest of rivers, its valley the loveliest of vales; luxuriant meadows; rich vineyards; groves of olive, of orange, and of chestnut; forests of cypress; long lines of mulberry; the dark purple of the distant Apennines; innumerable white villas peeping through the surrounding groves; the mysterious haze of the sunset, which throws a softer charm over the scene; the magnificent cattle; the fine horses; the bewitching girls, with their broad hats of Tuscan straw; the city itself, with its gloomy old palaces, iron-grated and massive walled, from the ancient holds of street-fighting nobles, long since passed away, to the severe Etruscan majesty of the Pitti Palace; behold Florence!

It is the abode of peace, gentleness, and kindly pleasure (or at any rate it was so when the Club was there). Every stone in its pavement has a charm. Other cities may please; Florence alone can win enduring love. It is one of the very few which a man can select as a permanent home, and never repent of his decision. In fact, it is probably the only city on earth which a stranger can live in and make for himself a true home, so pleasant as to make desire for any other simply impossible.

In Florence there is a large English population, drawn there by two powerful attractions. The first is the beauty of the place, with its healthy climate, its unrivalled collections of art, and its connection with the world at large. The second is the astonishing cheapness of living, though, alas! this is greatly changed from former times, since Florence has become the capital of Italy. Formerly a palace could be rented for a trifle, troops of servants for another trifle, and the table could be furnished from day to day with rarities and delicacies innumerable for another trifle. It is, therefore, a paradise for the respectable poor, the needy men of intelligence, and perhaps it may be added, for the shabby genteel. There is a glorious congregation of dilettanti, literati, savans; a blessed brotherhood of artists and authors; here gather political philosophers of every grade. It was all this even under the Grand Duke of refreshing memory; hereafter it will be the same, only, perhaps, a little more so, under the new influences which it shall acquire and exert as the metropolis of a great kingdom.

The Florentines are the most polished people under the sun. The Parisians claim this proud pre-eminence, but it can not be maintained. Amid the brilliancies of Parisian life there are fearful memories of bloody revolutions, brutal fights, and blood-thirsty cruelties. No such events as these mar the fair pages of later Florentine history. In fact, the forbearance and

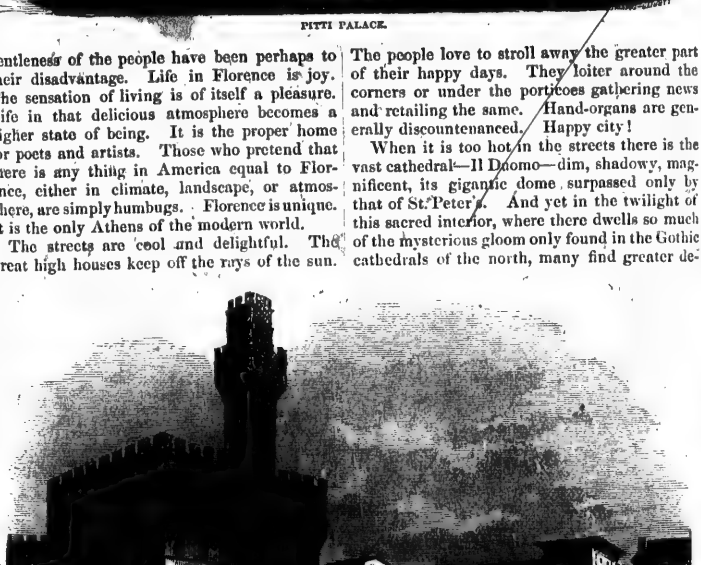
FLORENCE, FROM SAN MINIATO.

PITTI PALACE.

gentleness of the people have been perhaps to their disadvantage. Life in Florence is joy. The sensation of living is of itself a pleasure. Life in that delicious atmosphere becomes a higher state of being. It is the proper home for poets and artists. Those who pretend that there is any thing in America equal to Florence, either in climate, landscape, or atmosphere, are simply humbugs. Florence is unique. It is the only Athens of the modern world.

The streets are cool and delightful. The great high houses keep off the rays of the sun. The people love to stroll away the greater part of their happy days. They loiter around the corners or under the porticoes gathering news and retailing the same. Hand-organs are generally discountenanced. Happy city!

When it is too hot in the streets there is the vast cathedral—Il Duomo—dim, shadowy, magnificent, its gigantic dome surpassed only by that of St. Peter's. And yet in the twilight of this sacred interior, where there dwells so much of the mysterious gloom only found in the Gothic cathedrals of the north, many find greater de-



FOUNTAIN OF NEPTUNE, PALAZZO VECCHIO.

THE DUOMO.

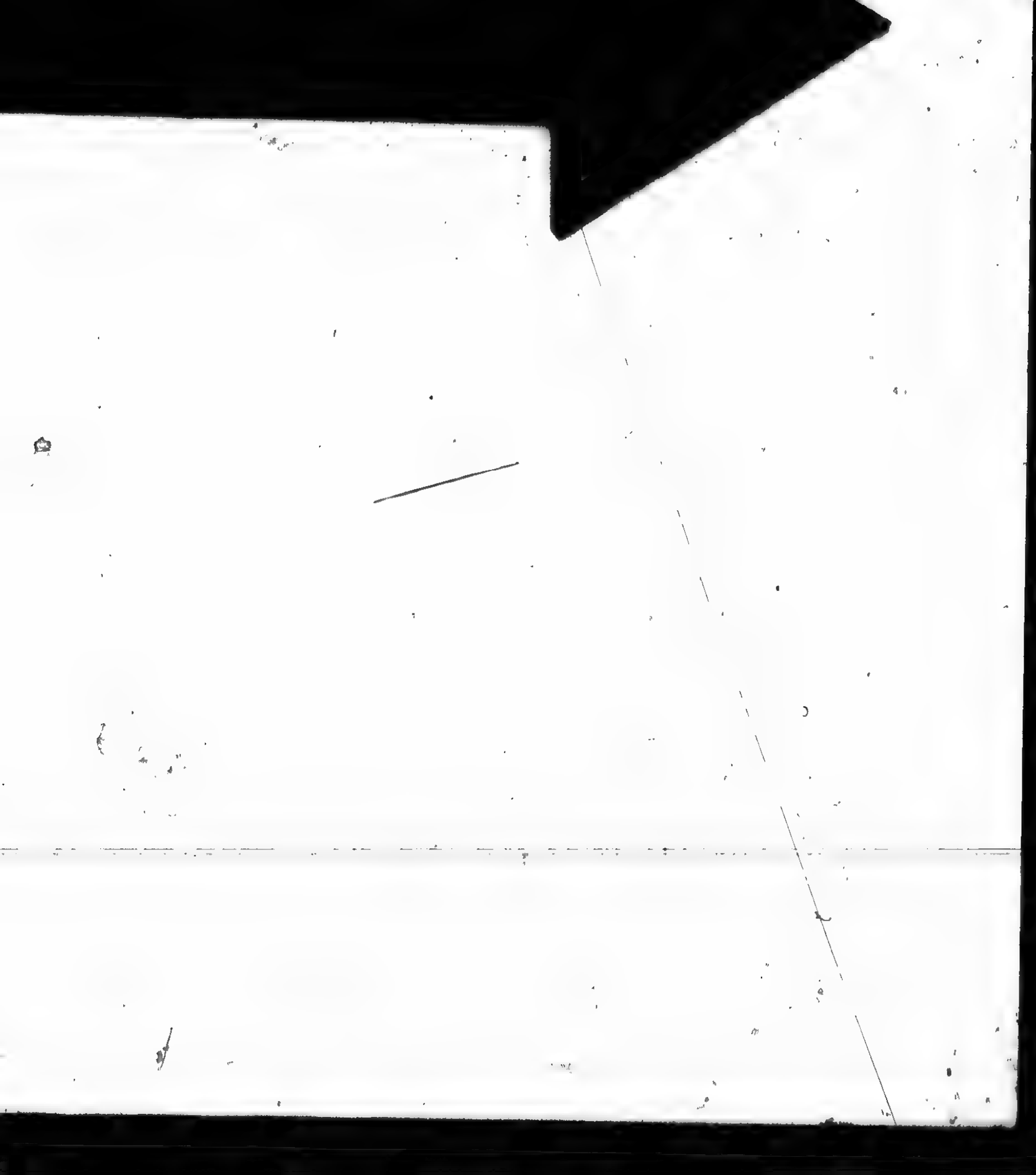
light than in all the dazzling splendor, the pomp, and glory, and majesty of the Roman temple. Beside it rises the Campanile, as fair as a dream, and in appearance almost as unsubstantial. Not far off is the Baptistery, with its gates of bronze—an assemblage of glory which might well suffice for one city.

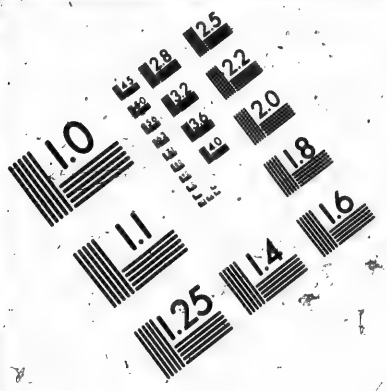
Around the piazza that incloses these sacred buildings they sell the best roasted chestnuts in the world. Is it any wonder that Florence is so attractive?

The Dodge Club obtained furnished apartments in a fine large hotel that looked out on the Ponte della Trinita and on the Arno. Beneath was the principal promenade in the city. It was a highly agreeable residence.

No sooner had they arrived than Buttons set out in search of the Spaniards. Three days had been lost on the road. He was half afraid that those three days had lost him the Spaniards altogether. Three days! It was possible that they had seen Florence in that time and had already left. The thought of this made Buttons feel extremely nervous. He spent the first day in looking over all the

THE CAMPANILE.




1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
1.8
2.0
2.2
2.5
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
4.5
5.0
5.6
6.3
7.1
8.0
9.0
10
11
12
13
14
16
18
20
22
25
28
32
36
40
45
50
56
63
71
80
90
100
110
125
140
160
180
200
220
250
280
320
360
400
450
500
560
630
710
800
900
1000
1100
1250
1400
1600
1800
2000
2200
2500
2800
3200
3600
4000
4500
5000
5600
6300
7100
8000
9000
10000
11000
12500
14000
16000
18000
20000
22000
25000
28000
32000
36000
40000
45000
50000
56000
63000
71000
80000
90000
100000
110000
125000
140000
160000
180000
200000
220000
250000
280000
320000
360000
400000
450000
500000
560000
630000
710000
800000
900000
1000000
1100000
1250000
1400000
1600000
1800000
2000000
2200000
2500000
2800000
3200000
3600000
4000000
4500000
5000000
5600000
6300000
7100000
8000000
9000000
10000000
11000000
12500000
14000000
16000000
18000000
20000000
22000000
25000000
28000000
32000000
36000000
40000000
45000000
50000000
56000000
63000000
71000000
80000000
90000000
100000000
110000000
125000000
140000000
160000000
180000000
200000000
220000000
250000000
280000000
320000000
360000000
400000000
450000000
500000000
560000000
630000000
710000000
800000000
900000000
1000000000
1100000000
1250000000
1400000000
1600000000
1800000000
2000000000
2200000000
2500000000
2800000000
3200000000
3600000000
4000000000
4500000000
5000000000
5600000000
6300000000
7100000000
8000000000
9000000000
10000000000
11000000000
12500000000
14000000000
16000000000
18000000000
20000000000
22000000000
25000000000
28000000000
32000000000
36000000000
40000000000
45000000000
50000000000
56000000000
63000000000
71000000000
80000000000
90000000000
100000000000
110000000000
125000000000
140000000000
160000000000
180000000000
200000000000
220000000000
250000000000
280000000000
320000000000
360000000000
400000000000
450000000000
500000000000
560000000000
630000000000
710000000000
800000000000
900000000000
1000000000000
1100000000000
1250000000000
1400000000000
1600000000000
1800000000000
2000000000000
2200000000000
2500000000000
2800000000000
3200000000000
3600000000000
4000000000000
4500000000000
5000000000000
5600000000000
6300000000000
7100000000000
8000000000000
9000000000000
10000000000000
11000000000000
12500000000000
14000000000000
16000000000000
18000000000000
20000000000000
22000000000000
25000000000000
28000000000000
32000000000000
36000000000000
40000000000000
45000000000000
50000000000000
56000000000000
63000000000000
71000000000000
80000000000000
90000000000000
100000000000000
110000000000000
125000000000000
140000000000000
160000000000000
180000000000000
200000000000000
220000000000000
250000000000000
280000000000000
320000000000000
360000000000000
400000000000000
450000000000000
500000000000000
560000000000000
630000000000000
710000000000000
800000000000000
900000000000000
1000000000000000
1100000000000000
1250000000000000
1400000000000000
1600000000000000
1800000000000000
2000000000000000
2200000000000000
2500000000000000
2800000000000000
3200000000000000
3600000000000000
4000000000000000
4500000000000000
5000000000000000
5600000000000000
6300000000000000
7100000000000000
8000000000000000
9000000000000000
10000000000000000
11000000000000000
12500000000000000
14000000000000000
16000000000000000
18000000000000000
20000000000000000
22000000000000000
25000000000000000
28000000000000000
32000000000000000
36000000000000000
40000000000000000
45000000000000000
50000000000000000
56000000000000000
63000000000000000
71000000000000000
80000000000000000
90000000000000000
100000000000000000
110000000000000000
125000000000000000
140000000000000000
160000000000000000
180000000000000000
200000000000000000
220000000000000000
250000000000000000
280000000000000000
320000000000000000
360000000000000000
400000000000000000
450000000000000000
500000000000000000
560000000000000000
630000000000000000
710000000000000000
800000000000000000
900000000000000000
1000000000000000000
1100000000000000000
1250000000000000000
1400000000000000000
1600000000000000000
1800000000000000000
2000000000000000000
2200000000000000000
2500000000000000000
2800000000000000000
3200000000000000000
3600000000000000000
4000000000000000000
4500000000000000000
5000000000000000000
5600000000000000000
6300000000000000000
7100000000000000000
8000000000000000000
9000000000000000000
10000000000000000000
11000000000000000000
12500000000000000000
14000000000000000000
16000000000000000000
18000000000000000000
20000000000000000000
22000000000000000000
25000000000000000000
28000000000000000000
32000000000000000000
36000000000000000000
40000000000000000000
45000000000000000000
50000000000000000000
56000000000000000000
63000000000000000000
71000000000000000000
80000000000000000000
90000000000000000000
100000000000000000000
110000000000000000000
125000000000000000000
140000000000000000000
160000000000000000000
180000000000000000000
200000000000000000000
220000000000000000000
250000000000000000000
280000000000000000000
320000000000000000000
360000000000000000000
400000000000000000000
450000000000000000000
500000000000000000000
560000000000000000000
630000000000000000000
710000000000000000000
800000000000000000000
900000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
56000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
63000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
71000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
80000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
90000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
110000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
125000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
140000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
160000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
180000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
220000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
280000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
320000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
360000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
450000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
560000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
630000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
710000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
900000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1250000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1400000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
1800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
2800000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3200000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
3600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
4500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
5600000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
6300000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
7100000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
8000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
9000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
10000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
11000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
12500000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
14000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
16000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
18000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
20000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
22000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
25000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
28000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
32000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
36000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
40000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
45000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000
50

STROZZI PALACE.

hotels in the city. The second in searching through as many of the lodging-houses as were likely to be chosen by the Spaniards. The third he spent in meandering disconsolately through the cafés. Still there were no signs of them. Upon this Buttons fell into a profound melancholy. In fact it was a very hard case. There seemed nothing left for him to do. How could he find them out?

Dick noticed the disquietude of his friend, and sympathized with him deeply. So he lent his aid and searched through the city as industriously as possible. Yet in spite of every effort their arduous labors were defeated. So Buttons became hopeless.

The Senator, however, had met with friends. The American Minister at Turin happened at that time to be in Florence. Him the Senator recollected as an old acquaintance, and also as a tried companion in arms through many a political campaign. The Minister received him with the most exuberant delight. Dinner, wine, feast of reason, flow of soul, interchange of latest news, stories of recent adventures on both sides, laughter, compliments, speculations on future party prospects, made the hours of an entire afternoon fly like lightning. The American Eagle was never more convivial.

The Minister would not let him go. He made him put up at his hotel. He had the *entrée* into the highest Florentine society. He would introduce the Senator everywhere. The Senator would have an opportunity of seeing Italian manners and customs such as was very rarely enjoyed. The Senator was delighted at the idea.

But Mr. Figgs and the Doctor began to show signs of weariness. The former walked with Dick through the Boboli gardens and confided all his soul to his young friend. What was the use of an elderly man like him putting himself to so much trouble? He had seen enough of Italy. He didn't want to see any more. He would much rather be safe at home. Besides, the members of the Club were all going down the broad road that leadeth to ruin. Buttons was infatuated about those Spaniards. The Doctor thought that he (Dick) was involved in some mysterious affair of a similar nature. Lastly, the Senator was making a plunge into society. It was too much. The ride over the Apennines to Bologna might be interesting for two young fellows like him and Buttons, but was unfit for an elderly person. Moreover, he didn't care about going to the seat of war. He had seen enough of fighting. In short, he and the Doctor had made up their minds to go back to Paris *via* Leghorn and Marseilles.

Dick remonstrated, expostulated, coaxed. But Mr. Figgs was inflexible.

BUTTONS MELANCHOLY.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SENATOR ENTRAPPED. — THE WILES AND WITCHERY OF A QUEEN OF SOCIETY. — HIS FATE DESTINED TO BE, AS HE THINKS, ITALIAN COUNTESSES. — SENTIMENTAL CONVERSATION. — POETRY. — BEAUTY. — MOONLIGHT. — RAPTURE. — DISTRACTION. — BLISS!

THE blandishments of Florentine society might have led captive a sterner soul than that of the Senator. Whether he wished it or not, he was overcome. His friend, the Minister, took him to the houses of the leaders of society, and introduced him as an eminent American statesman and member of the Senate.

Could any recommendation be equal to that? For, be it remembered, it was the Revolutionary time. Republicanism ran high. America was synonymous with the Promised Land. To be a statesman in America was as great a dignity as to be prince in any empire on earth. Besides, it was infinitely more honored, for it was popular. The eyes of the struggling people were turned to that country which showed them an example of republican freedom.

So if the Florentines received the Senator with boundless hospitality, it was because they admired his country, and reverenced his dignity. They liked to consider the presence of the American Minister and Senator as an expression of the good-will of the American Government. They looked upon him diplomatically. All that he said was listened to with the deepest respect, which was none the less when they did not comprehend a word. His pithy sentences, when translated into Italian, became the neatest epigrams in the world. His suggestions as to the best mode of elevating and enriching the country were considered by one set as the profoundest philosophy, and by another as the keenest satire. They were determined to lionize him. It was a new sensation to the Senator. He desired to prolong it. He recalled the lines of the good Watts:

> "My willing soul would stay
> In such a frame as this."

He thought of Dr. Franklin in Paris, of his severe republicanism amid the aristocratic influences around. How like his present situation was to that of the august philosopher!

The marked attention which the Minister paid to the Senator added greatly to the importance of the latter. The Florentines reasoned thus: A Minister is a great man. As a general thing his travelling countrymen pay respect to him. What then must be the position of that travelling fellow-countryman who receives attention instead of paying it? What would the position of an Englishman need to be in order to gain the attention of the British Embassador? Ducal at least. Hence there is only one conclusion. An American Senator ranks with an English Duke.

Others went beyond this: Mark the massive forehead, the severe eye, the cool, self-possessed mien of this American. The air of one accustomed to rule. Listen to his philosophic conversation. One of America's greatest statesmen. No doubt he has a certain prospect of becoming President. President! It must be so; and that accounts for the attention paid by the American Embassador. He, of course, wishes to be continued in his office under the next administration. After all, the Florentines were not so far out of the way. A much worse man than the Senator might be made President. In the chapter of accidents his name, or the name of one like him, might carry the votes of some roaring convention.

For two or three days the Senator was the subject of an eager contest among all the leaders of society. At length there appeared upon the scene the great Victrix in a thousand contests such as these. The others fell back discomfited, and the Senator became her prey.

The Countess di Nottinero was not exactly a Recamier, but she was a remarkably brilliant woman, and the acknowledged leader of the liberal part of Florentine society. Of course, the haughty aristocratic party held themselves grandly aloof, and knew nothing either of her or the society to which she belonged.

She was generally known as *La Cica*, a nickname given by her enemies, though what "Cica" meant no one could tell exactly. It was a sort of contraction made up from her Christian name, Cecilia, as some thought; others thought it was the Italian word *cica* given on account of some unknown incident. At any rate, as soon as she made her appearance driving down the Lungh' Arno, with the massive form of the Senator by her side, his fame rose up to its zenith. He became more remarked than ever, and known among all classes as the illustrious American to whom belonged the certainty of being next President of the United States.

Rumor strengthened as it grew. Reports were circulated which would certainly have amazed the worthy Senator if he had heard them all. It was said that he was the special Plenipotentiary Extraordinary sent by the American Government as a mark of their deep sympathy with the Italian movement, and that he was empowered, at the first appearance of a new Government in Italy, to recognize it officially as a first-class Power, and thus give it the mighty sanction of the United States.

What wonder that all eyes were turned admiringly toward him wherever he went. But he was too modest to notice it. He little knew that he was the chief object of interest to every house, hotel, and café in the city. Yet it was a fact.

His companions lost sight of him for some time. They heard the conversation going on about the sayings of the great American. They did not know at first who it was; but at length concluded that it referred to the Minister from Turin.

La Cica did her part marvellously well. All the dilettanti, the artists, authors, political philosophers, and *beaux esprits* of every grade followed the example of *La Cica*. And it is a

fact that by the mere force of character, apart from any adventitious aids of refinement, the Senator held his own remarkably. Yet it must be confessed that he was at times extremely puzzled.

La Cica did not speak the best English in the world; yet that could not account for all the singular remarks which she made. Still less could it account for the tender interest of her manner. She had remarkably bright eyes. Why wandered those eyes so often to his, and why did they beam with such devotion—beaming for a moment only to fall in sweet innocent confusion? *La Cica* had the most fascinating manners, yet they were often perplexing to the Senator's soul. The little offices which she required of him did not appear in his matter-of-fact eyes as strictly prudent. The innate gallantry which he possessed carried him bravely along through much that was bewildering to his nerves. Yet he was often in danger of running away in terror.

"The Countess," he thought, "is a most remarkable fine woman; but she does use her eyes uncommon, and I do wish she wouldn't be quite so demonstrative."

The good Senator had never before encountered a thorough woman of the world, and was as ignorant as a child of the innumerable little harmless arts by which the power of such a one is extended and secured. At last the Senator came to this conclusion. *La Cica* was desperately in love with him.

She appeared to be a widow. At least she had no husband that he had ever seen; and therefore to the Senator's mind she must be a spinster or a widow. From the general style in which she was addressed he concluded that she was the latter. Now if the poor *Cica* was hopelessly in love, it must be stopped at once. For he was a married man, and his good lady still lived, with a very large family, most of the members of which had grown up.

La Cica ought to know this. She ought indeed. But let the knowledge be given delicately, not abruptly. He confided his little difficulty to his friend the Minister. The Minister only laughed heartily.

"But give me your opinion."

The Minister held his sides, and laughed more immoderately than ever.

"It's no laughing matter," said the Senator. "It's serious. I think you might give an opinion."

But the Minister declined. A broad grin wreathed his face during all the remainder of his stay at Florence. In fact, it is said that it has remained there ever since.

The Senator felt indignant, but his course was taken. On the following evening they walked on the balcony of *La Cica's* noble residence. She was sentimental, devoted, charming.

The conversation of a fascinating woman does not look so well when reported as it is when uttered. Her power is in her tone, her glance, her manner. Who can catch the evanescent beauty of her expression or the deep tenderness of her well-modulated voice? Who indeed?

"Does ze scene please you, my Senator?"

"Very much indeed."

"Youar countrymen haf tol me zey would like to stay here alloway."

"It is a beautiful place."

"Did you aiver see any thin moaire loafely?" And the Countess looked full in his face.

"Never," said the Senator, earnestly. The next instant he blushed. He had been betrayed into a compliment.

The Countess sighed.

"Helas! my Senator, that it is not pairmitted to moartals to sociate as zey would laike."

"'Your Senator,'" thought the gentleman thus addressed; "how fond, how tender—poor thing! poor thing!"

"I wish that Italy was nearer to the States," said he.

"How I adamiar youar style of mind, so differente from ze Italiana. You are so strong—so nobile. Yet would I laike to see moar of ze poetic in you."

"I always loved poetry, marm," said the Senator, desperately.

"Ah—good—nais—eccelente. I am plees at zat," cried the Countess, with much animation. "You would loafe it moar eef you knew Italiano. Your [illegible] not sufficiente musicale for poatry."

"It is not so soft a language as the *I*-talian."

"Ah—no!—not so soft. Very well. And what theenka you of ze Italiano?"

"The sweetest language I ever heard in all my born days."

"Ah, now—you hev not heard much of ze Italiano, my Senator."

"I have heard you speak often," said the Senator, naïvely.

"Ah, you compliment! I sot you was aboove flattera."

And the Countess playfully tapped his arm with her little fan.

"What Ingelis poet do you loafe best?"

"Poet? English poet?" said the Senator, with some surprise. "Oh—why, marm, I think Watts is about the best of the lot!"

"Watt? Was he a poet? I did not know zat. He who invented ze stim-injaine? And yet if he was a poet it is naturale zat you loafe him best."

"Steam-engine? Oh no! This one was a minister."

"A meenecstaire? Ah! an abbé? I know him not. Yet I haf read moa of all youar poets."

"He made up hymns, marm, and psalms—for instance: 'Watts's Divine Hymns and Spiritual Songs.'"

"Songs? Spirituelle? Ah, I mus at once procuaire ze works of Watt, which was favorit poet of my Senator."

"A lady of such intelligence as you would like the poet Watts," said the Senator, firmly.

LA CICA.

"He is the best known by far of all our poets."

"What? better zan Sakespeare, Milton, Bairon? You much surprass me."

"Better known and better loved than the whole lot. Why, his poetry is known by heart through all England and America."

"Merciful Heaven! what you tell me! ees eet possbl! An yet he is not known here efen by name. It would plees me mooch, my Senator, to haire you make one quotatione. Know you Watt? Tell to me some words of his which I may remembaire."

"I have a shocking bad memory."

"Bad memora! Oh, but you remember somethin, zis mos beautful charm nait—you haf a nobile soul—you mus be affecta by beauty—by ze ideal. Make for a me one quotatione."

And she rested her little hand on the Senator's arm, and looked up imploringly in his face.

The Senator looked foolish. He felt even more so. Here was a beautiful woman, by act and look showing a tender interest in him. Perplexing—but very flattering after all. So he replied:

"You will not let me refuse you any thing."

"Aha! you are vera willin to refuse. It is difficulty for me to excitare youar regards. You are fill with the grands ideas. But come—will you spik for me some from your favorit Watt?"

"Well, if you wish it so much," said the Senator, kindly, and he hesitated.

"Ah—I do wis it so much!"

"Ehem!"

"Begin," said the Countess. "Behold me. I listen. I hear everysin, and will remembaire it forava."

The only thing that the Senator could think of was the verse which had been running in his head for the last few days, its measured rhythm keeping time with every occupation:

"'My willing soul would stay—'"

"Stop one moment," said the Countess. "I weesh to learn it from you;" and she looked fondly and tenderly up, but instantly dropped her eyes.

"'Ma willins sol wooda stu—'"

"In such a frame as this,'" prompted the Senator.

"'Een socha framas zees.' Wait—'Ma willina sol wooda sta in socha framas zees.' Ah, appropriat! but could I hope zat you were true to zose lines, my Senator? Well?"

"'And sit and sing herself away,'" said the Senator, in a faltering voice, and breaking out into a cold perspiration for fear of committing himself by such uncommonly strong language.

"'Ansit ansin hassaf awai,'" repeated the Countess, her face lighting up with a sweetly conscious expression.

The Senator paused.

"Well?"

"I—ehem! I forget."

"Forget? Impossible!"

"I do really."

"Ah now! Forget? I see by youar face—you desave. Say on."

The Countess again gently touched his arm with both of her little hands, and held it as though she would clasp it.

"Have you fear? Ah, cruel!"

The Senator turned pale, but finding refusal impossible, boldly finished:

"'To everlasting bliss'—there!"

"'To affarlastin blees thar.' Stop. I repeat it all: 'My willina sol wooda sta in socha framas zees, ansit ansin hassaf awai to affarlastin blees thar.' Am I right?"

"Yes," said the Senator, meekly.

"I knew you war a poetic sole," said the Countess, confidingly. "You air honesto—true—you can not desave. When you spik I can beliv you. Ah, my Senator! an you can spik zis poetry!—at soch a taime! I nefare knew befoare zat you was so impassione!—an you air so artaful! You breeng ze confersazione to beauty—to poatry—to ze poet Watt—so you may spik verses mos impassione! Ah! what do you mean? Santissima madre! how I wish you spik Italiano."

The Countess drew nearer to him, but her approach only deepened his perplexity.

"How that poor thing does love me!" sighed the Senator. "Law bless it! she can't help it—can't help it nohow. She is a goner; and what can I do? I'll have to leave Florence. Oh, why did I quit Buttons! Oh, why—"

The Countess was standing close beside him in a tender mood waiting for him to break the silence. How could he? He had been uttering words which sounded to her like love; and she—"a widow! a widow! wretched man that I am!"

There was a pause. The longer it lasted the more awkward the Senator felt. What upon earth was he to do or say? What business had he to go and quote poetry to widows? What an old fool he must be! But the Countess was very far from feeling awkward. Assuming an elegant attitude she looked up, her face expressing the tenderest solicitude.

"What ails my Senator?"

"Why the fact is, marm—I feel sad—at leaving Florence. I must go shortly. My wife has written summoning me home. The children are down with the measles."

Oh, base fabrication! Oh, false Senator! There wasn't a word of truth in that remark. You spoke so because you wished *La Cica* to know that you had a wife and family. Yet it was very badly done.

La Cica changed neither her attitude nor her expression. Evidently the existence of his wife, and the melancholy situation of his unfortunate children, awaked no sympathy.

"But, my Senator—did you not say you wooda seeng youselef away to affarlasteen belees?"

"Oh, marm, it was a quotation—only a quotation."

But at this critical juncture the conversation was broken up by the arrival of a number of ladies and gentlemen.

But could the Senator have known!

Could he but have known how and where those words would confront him again!

CHAPTER XLIV.

"MORERE DIAGORA, NON ENIM IN CŒLUM ADSCENSURUS ES."—THE APOTHEOSIS OF THE SENATOR (NOTHING LESS—IT WAS A MOMENT IN WHICH A MAN MIGHT WISH TO DIE—THOUGH, OF COURSE, THE SENATOR DIDN'T DIE).

STROLLING through the streets day by day Buttons and Dick beheld the triumph of the Senator. They gazed on it from afar, and in amazement saw their old companion suddenly lifted up to a position which they could not hope to gain. The companion of nobles—the associate of *beaux esprits*—the friend of the wealthy, the great, and the proud; what in the world was the cause of this sudden, this unparalleled leap forward to the very highest point of honor? Who, in the name of goodness, was that dashing woman with whom he was always driving about? Who were those fair ladies with whom he was forever promenading? Plainly the chief people of the land; but how the mischief did he get among them? They were bewildered even though the half of the truth had not begun to dawn upon their minds. They never saw him to ask him about it, and for some time only looked upon him from a distance.

"Do you give it up?" asked Buttons.

"I give it up."

"And I too."

"At any rate the United States might have many a worse representative."

"But I wonder how he can get along. How can he manage to hold his own among these refined, over-cultivated, fastidious Florentines?"

"Goodness knows!"

"A common school New England education can scarcely fit a man for intercourse with polished Italians. The granite hills of New Hamp-

shire have never been famous for producing men of high breeding. That is not their specialty."

"Besides, our good friend can not speak a single word of any language but his own."

"And frequently fails in that."

"He hasn't the remotest glimmering of an idea about Art."

"Not of the Fine Arts, but in the useful arts he is immense."

"He looks upon Italy as he would upon a field of stumps—a place to be cleared, broken up, brought under cultivation, and made productive."

"Yes, productive in cotton factories and Yankee notions."

"What in the world can keep up his reputation among the most poetic and least utilitarian people in the world?"

"There's the mystery!"

"The beauty of it is he goes as much with the English as with the Italians. Can he keep up his vernacular among them and still preserve the charm?"

"Well, whatever is the secret, I glory in it. I believe in him. He is a man. A more noble-hearted, sincere, upright, guileless soul never lived. Besides, he knows thoroughly what he has gone over."

"He is as generous a soul as ever lived."

"Yes, a stiff utilitarian in theory, but in practice an impulsive sentimentalist."

"He would legislate according to the most narrow and selfish principles, but would lay down his life for his friend."

"Think of him at Perugia!"

"Yes; the man himself with his brave soul and invincible courage. Didn't he fight? Methinks he did!"

"If it hadn't been for him it is extremely probable that you and I would now have been —well, certainly not just here."

Talking thus, the two young men walked up toward the Palazzo Vecchio. They noticed that the busy street through which they passed was filled with an unusual multitude, who were all agitated with one general and profound excitement, and were all hurrying in one direction. The sight awakened their interest. They went on with the stream. At every step the crowd increased. At every street new throngs poured in to join the vast multitude.

Confused murmurs rose into the air. Hasty words passed from mouth to mouth. They were unintelligible. They could only distinguish broken sentences—words unknown—Cavriana — Mincio — Tedeschi—Napoleone—Spia d'Italia. What was it all about? They could not guess. Evidently some mighty national event had occurred, which was of overwhelming importance. For the entire city had turned out, and now, as they entered the great square in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, an astonishing sight burst upon their view. A vast multitude filled the square to overflowing. Loud cries arose. Shouts of a thousand kinds all blending together into one deafening roar, and rising on high like the thunder of a cataract:

"Vittoria!" "Vittoria!" "Cavriana!" "I Francesi!" "Viva l'Italia!" "Viva Vittore Emmanuele! il nostro Re!" "Viva!" "*Viva!!*" "VIVA!!!"

Words like these rose all around, mingled with thousands of similar exclamations. At length there was distinguished *one word*. It was passed from man to man, more frequently uttered, gathering as it passed, adding new volumes of meaning to its own sonorous sound, till at last all other words were drowned in that one grand word, which to this rejoicing multitude was the lyre of glorious victory, the promise of endless triumphs for regenerated Italy:

"SOLFERINO!"

SOLFERINO!

"*Solferino!*" They did not know then, as they listened, the full meaning of that eloquent word. But on mingling with the shouting crowd they soon learned it all: how the accursed Tedeschi had summoned all their energy to crush forever the army of liberty; how the Kaisar himself came from beyond the mountains to insure his triumph; how the allied armies had rushed upon their massive columns and beaten them back; how, hour after hour, the battle raged, till at last the plain for many a league was covered with the wounded and the dead; how the wrongs of ages were crowded together in the glorious vengeance of that day of days; how Victory hovered over the invincible banners of Italy; how the Tedeschi fled, routed, over the river, no more to cross it as masters; how the hopes of Italy arose immortal from that one day's terrific slaughter; how Liberty was now forever secured, and a Kingdom of Italy under an Italian King.

"Viva l'Italia!" "Viva Luigi Napoleone!" "Viva Garibaldi!" "Viva Vittore Emmanuele, Re d'Italia!"

In great moments of popular excitement people do not talk to one another. They rhapsodize; and the Italians more than any other people. Hence the above.

THE SENATOR SPEAKS.

Buttons and Dick clambered up to the recess of a window and contemplated the scene. There was the innumerable crowd; swaying, embracing, laughing, weeping, shouting, cheering. High in the air waved hundreds of banners; and the tri-color flaunted in ribbons from thousands of breasts, or shone in rosettes, or gleamed in flowers. Ever and anon loud trumpet blasts arose triumphantly on high; in the distance victorious strains came swelling up from bands hurried there to express in thrilling music what words could never utter; while all around the whole air rang with the thunder of cannon that saluted the triumph of Solferino.

"Look there! *Look!* Look!" cried Dick.

He pointed to the large portico which is on the right of the Palazzo Vecchio. Buttons looked as he was directed.

He saw a great assemblage of ladies and gentlemen, the chief people of the Tuscan state. From this place those announcements had been made which had set the people wild with joy. There were beautiful ladies whose flushed faces and suffused eyes bore witness to their deep emotion. There were noble gentlemen whose arms still waved in the air as they cheered for Italy. And there, high above all others, rose a familiar figure—the massive shoulders, the calm, shrewd, square face, the benignant glance and smile, which could belong only to one person.

"*The Senator!*" cried Buttons.

Every body was looking in that direction. The impulsive crowd having celebrated abstract ideas, were now absolutely hungering for some tangible object upon which to expend something of the warmth of their feelings. A few who stood near the Senator and were impressed by his aspect, as soon as all the news had been made known, gave expression and direction to the feeling by shouting his name. As they shouted others took up the cry, louder, louder, and louder still, till his name burst forth in one sublime sound from thirty thousand lips.

No wonder that he started at such an appeal. He turned and looked upon the crowd. An ordinary man would have exhibited either confusion or wonder. The Senator, being an extraordinary man, exhibited neither. As he turned a vast roar burst from the multitude.

"Good Heavens!" cried Buttons; "what's in the wind now? Will this be a repetition of the scene in the Place Vendôme?"

"Hush!"

The crowd saw before them the man whose name and fame had been the subject of conjecture, wonder, applause, and hope for many days. They beheld in him the Representative of a mighty nation, sent to give them the right hand of fellowship, and welcome their country among the great powers of the earth. In him they saw the embodiment of America!

"Viva!" burst through the air. "The American Embassador!" "Hurrah for the American Embassador!" "The Plenipotentiary Extraordinary!" "He comes to crown our triumph!" "Hurrah for America!" "Free, generous America!" "The first nation to welcome Italy!" "Hurrah!" "This is the time!" "He will speak!" "Silence!" "Silence!" "He rises!" "Lo!" "He looks at us!" "Silence!" "Listen to the Most Illustrious Plenipotentiary Extraordinary!" "*Hush! America speaks!*"

Such shouts and exclamations as these burst forth, with many others to the same effect. The crowd in front of the portico where the Senator stood were almost uncontrollable in their excitement. The Senator rose to the greatness of the occasion. Here was a chance to speak—to utter forth the deep sympathy of his countrymen with every down-trodden people striving for freedom. He turned to face them and held out his hand. At once the immense assemblage was hushed to silence.

The Senator took off his hat. Never before did he look as he looked now. The grandeur of the occasion had sublimed his usually rugged features into majesty. He looked like the incarnation of a strong, vigorous, invincible people.

The Senator spoke:

"Men of Italy!

"In the name of the Great Republic!—I congratulate you on this glorious victory! It is a triumph of Liberty!—of the principles of '76!—of the immortal ideas!—for which our forefathers fought and died!—at Lexington!—at Bunker Hill!—and at a thousand other places in the great and glorious Revolution!"

The Senator paused. This was enough. It had been spoken in English. The Italians did not of course understand a word, yet they comprehended all his meaning. As he paused there burst forth a shout of joy such as is heard only once in a life-time; shout upon shout. The long peals of sound rose up and spread far away over the city. The vast crowd vibrated like one man to the impulse of the common enthusiasm.

It was too great to last. They rushed to the carriage of *La Cica*. They unharnessed the horses. They led the Senator to it and made him enter. They flung their tri-colors in. They threw flowers on his lap. They wound the flag of Italy around the carriage. A thousand marched before it. Thousands more walked beside and behind. They drew him up to his hotel in triumph, and the band struck up the thrilling strain of "Yankee Doodle!"

It would be unfair not to render justice to *La Cica*. She bore the scene admirably. Her beaming face, and lustrous eyes, and heaving bosom, and majestic air, showed that she appropriated to herself all the honor thus lavished upon the Senator. It was a proud moment for *La Cica*.

"Dick," said Buttons, as they descended from their perch.

"Well?"

"How do you feel now?"

"Obliterated. I do not exist. I was once a blot. I am expunged. There is no such thing as Dick."

"Who could have imagined this?"

"And how he bore it! The Senator is a great man! But come. Don't let us speak for an hour, for we are both unable to talk coherently."

From patriotic motives the two young men walked behind the Senator's carriage and cheered all the way.

Upon arriving at their lodgings in the evening they stationed themselves at the window and looked out upon the illuminated scene. Dick, finding his emotions too strong to be restrained, took his trombone and entertained a great crowd for hours with all the national airs that he knew.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE PRIVATE OPINION OF THE DOCTOR ABOUT FOREIGN TRAVEL.—BUTTONS STILL MEETS WITH AFFLICTIONS.

"The Italians, or at any rate the people of Florence, have just about as much cuteness as you will find anywhere."

Such was the dictum of the Senator in a conversation with his companions after rejoining them at the hotel. They had much to ask; he, much to tell. Never had he been more critical, more approbative. He felt that he thoroughly understood the Italian question, and expressed himself in accordance with this consciousness.

"Nothing does a feller so much good," said he, "as mixing in all grades of society. It won't ever do to confine our observation to the lower classes. We must mingle with the upper-crust, who are the leaders of the people."

"Unfortunately," said Buttons, "we are not all Senators, so we have to do the best we can with our limited opportunities."

They had been in Florence long enough, and now the general desire was to go on. Mr. Figgs and the Doctor had greatly surprised the Senator by informing him that they did not intend to go any further.

And why not?

"Well, for my own part," said Mr. Figgs, "the discomforts of travel are altogether too great. It would not be so bad in the winter, but think how horribly hot it is. What is my condition? That of a man slowly suffocating. Think how fat I am. Even if I had the enthusiasm of Dick, or the fun of Buttons, my fat would force me to leave. Can you pretend to be a friend of mine and still urge me to go further? And suppose we passed over into the Austrian territory. Perhaps we might be unmolested, but it is doubtful. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that we were arrested and detained. Imagine us—imagine *me*—shut up in a room—or worse, a cell—in the month of July,

A GREASE SPOT.

in midsummer, in the hottest part of this burning fiery furnace of a country! What would be left of me at the end of a week, or at the end of even one day? What? A grease spot! A grease spot! Not a bit more, by Jingo!"

After this speech, which was for him one of extraordinary length and vigor, Mr. Figgs fell exhausted into his chair.

"But you, Doctor," said the Senator, seeing that Mr. Figgs was beyond the reach of persuasion—"you—what reason is there for you to leave? You are young, strong, and certainly not fat."

"No, thank heaven! it is not the heat, or the fear of being suffocated in an Austrian dungeon, that influences me."

"What, then, is the reason?"

"These confounded disturbances," said the Doctor languidly.

"Disturbances?"

"Yes. I hear that the road between this and Bologna swarms with vagabonds. Several diligences have been robbed. I heard a story which shows this state of things. A band of men entered the theatre of a small town along the road while the inhabitants were witnessing the play. At first the spectators thought it was part of the performance. They were soon undeceived. The men drew up in line in front of the stage and levelled their pieces. Then fastening the doors, they sent a number of men around through the house to plunder the whole audience. Not content with this they made the authorities of the town pay a heavy ransom."

"Some one has been humbugging you, Doctor," said Buttons.

"I had it from good authority," said the Doctor, calmly. "These fellows call themselves Revolutionists, and the peasantry sympathize with them."

"Well, if we meet with them there will be a little additional excitement."

"Yes, and the loss of our watches and money."

"We can carry our money where they won't find it, and our bills of exchange are all right, you know."

"I think none of you will accuse me of want of courage. If I met these fellows you know very well that I would go in for fighting them. But what I do object to is the infernal bother of being stopped, detained, or perhaps sent back. Then if any of us got wounded we would be laid up for a month or so. That's what I object to. If I had to do it it would be different, but I see no necessity."

"You surely want to see Lombardy?"

"No, I don't."

"Not Bologna?"

"No."

"Ferrara?"

"No."

"Do you mean to say that you don't want to see Venice and Milan?"

"Haven't the remotest desire to see either of the places. I merely wish to get back again to Paris. It's about the best place I've seen yet, except, of course, my native city, Philadelphia. That I think is without an equal. However, our minds are made up. We don't wish to change your plans—in fact, we never thought it possible. We are going to take the steamer at Leghorn for Marseilles, and go on to Paris."

"Well, Doctor," said Dick, "will you do me one favor before you go?"

"With pleasure. What is it?"

"Sell me your pistol."

"I can't *sell* it," said the Doctor. "It was a present to me. But I will be happy to lend it to you till we meet again in Paris. We will be sure to meet there in a couple of months at the furthest."

The Doctor took out his pistol and handed it to Dick, who thankfully received it.

"Oh, Buttons," said the Senator, suddenly, "I have good news for you. I ought to have told you before."

"Good news? what?"

"I saw the Spaniards."

"The Spaniards!" cried Buttons, eagerly, starting up. "Where did you see them? When? Where are they? I have scoured the whole town."

"I saw them at a very crowded assembly at the Countess's. There was such a scrouging that I could not get near them. The three were there. The little Don and his two sisters."

"And don't you know any thing about them?"

"Not a hooter, except something that the

Countess told me. I think she said that they were staying at the villa of a friend of hers."

"A friend? Oh, confound it all! What shall I do?"

"The villa is out of town."

"That's the reason why I never could see them. Confound it all, what shall I do?"

"Buttons," said the Senator, gravely, "I am truly sorry to see a young man like you so infatuated about foreign women. Do not be offended, I mean it kindly. She may be a Jesuit in disguise; who knows? And why will you put yourself to grief about a little black-eyed gal that don't know a word of English? Believe me, New England is wide, and has ten thousand better gals than ever she began to be. If you will get in love wait till you get home and fall in love like a Christian, a Republican, and a Man."

But the Senator's words had no effect. Buttons sat for a few moments lost in thought. At length he rose and quietly left the room. It was about nine in the morning when he left. It was about nine in the evening when he returned. He looked dusty, fatigued, fagged, and dejected. He had a long story to tell, and was quite communicative. The substance of it was this: On leaving the hotel he had gone at once to *La Cica's* residence, and had requested permission to see her. He could not till twelve. He wandered about and called again at that hour. She was very amiable, especially on learning that he was a friend of the Senator, after whom she asked with deep interest. Nothing could exceed her affability. She told him all that she knew about the Spaniards. They were stopping at the villa of a certain friend of hers whom she named. It was ten miles from the city. The friend had brought them to the assembly. It was but for a moment that she had seen them. She wished for his sake that she had learned more about them. She trusted that he would succeed in his earnest search. She should think that they might still be in Florence, and if he went out at once he might see them. Was this his first visit to Florence? How perfectly he had the Tuscan accent; and why had he not accompanied his friend the Senator to her salon? But it would be impossible to repeat all that *La Cica* said.

Buttons went out to the villa at once; but to his extreme disgust found that the Spaniards had left on the preceding day for Bologna. He drove about the country for some distance, rested his horses, and took a long walk, after which he returned.

Their departure for Bologna on the following morning was a settled thing. The diligence started early. They had pity on the flesh of Figgs and the spirit of the Doctor. So they bade them good-bye on the evening before retiring.

FAREWELL, FIGGS!

CHAPTER XLVI.

A MEMORABLE DRIVE.—NIGHT.—THE BRIGANDS ONCE MORE.—GARIBALDI'S NAME.—THE FIRE.—THE IRON BAR.—THE MAN FROM THE GRANITE STATE AND HIS TWO BOYS.

"The great beauty of this pistol is a little improvement that I have not seen before."

And Dick proceeded to explain.

"Here is the chamber with the six cavities loaded. Now, you see, when you wish, you touch this spring and out pops the butt."

"Well?"

"Very well. Here I have another chamber with six cartridges. It's loaded, the cartridges are covered with copper and have detonating powder at one end. As quick as lightning I put this on, and there you have the pistol ready to be fired again six times."

"So you have twelve shots?"

"Yes."

"And cartridges to spare?"

"The Doctor gave me all that he had, about sixty, I should think."

"You have enough to face a whole army—"

"Precisely—and in my coat-pocket."

This conversation took place

in the banquette of the diligence that conveyed Dick, Buttons, and the Senator from Florence to Bologna. A long part of the journey had been passed over. They were among the mountains.

"Do you expect to use that?" asked the Senator, carelessly.

"I do."

"You believe these stories then?"

"Yes; don't you?"

"Certainly."

"So do I," said Buttons. "I could not get a pistol; but I got this from an acquaintance."

And he drew from his pocket an enormous bowie-knife.

"Bowie-knives are no good," said the Senator. "Perhaps they may do if you want to assassinate; but for nothing else. You can't defend yourself. I never liked it. It's not American. It's not the direct result of our free institutions."

"What have you then? You are not going unarmed."

"This," said the Senator.

And he lifted up a crow-bar from the front of the coach. Brandishing it in the air as easily as an ordinary man would swing a walking-stick, he looked calmly at his astonished companions.

"You see," said he, "there are several reasons why this sort of thing is the best weapon for me. A short knife is no use. A sword is no good, for I don't know the sword exercise. A gun is worthless; I would fire it off once and then have to use it as a club. It would then be apt to break. That would be disagreeable—especially in the middle of a fight. A stick or club of any kind would be open to the same objection. What, then, is the weapon for me? Look at me. I am big, strong, and active. I have no skill. I am brute strength. So a club is my only weapon—a club that won't break. Say iron, then. There you have it."

And the Senator swung the ponderous bar around in a way that showed the wisdom of his choice.

"You are about right," said Buttons. "I venture to say you'll do as much mischief with that as Dick will with his pistol. Perhaps more. As for me, I don't expect to do much. Still, if the worst comes, I'll try to do what I can."

"We may not have to use them," said the Senator. "Who are below?"

"Below?"

"In the coach?"

"Italians."

"Women?"

"No, all men. Two priests, three shop-keeper-looking persons, and a soldier."

"Ah! Why, we ought to be comparatively safe."

"Oh, our number is not any thing. The country is in a state of anarchy. Miserable devils of half-starved Italians swarm along the road, and they will try to make hay while the sun shines. I have no doubt we will be stopped half a dozen times before we get to Bologna."

"I should think," said the Senator, indignantly, "that if these chaps undertake to govern the country—these republican chaps—they had ought to govern it. What kind of a way is this to leave helpless travellers at the mercy of cut-throats and assassins?"

"They think," said Buttons, "that their first duty is to secure independence, and after that they will promote order."

"The Florentines are a fine people—a people of remarkable 'cuteness and penetration; but it seems to me that they are taking things easy as far as fighting is concerned. They don't send their soldiers to the war, do they?"

"Well, no; I suppose they think their army may be needed nearer home. The Grand Duke has long arms yet; and knows how to bribe."

By this time they were among the mountain forests where the scenery was grander, the air cooler, the sky darker, than before. It was late in the day, and every mile increased the wildness of the landscape and the thickness of the gloom. Further and further, on they went till at last they came to a winding-place where the road ended at a gully over which there was a bridge. On the bridge was a barricade. They did not see it until they had made a turn where the road wound, where at once the scene burst on their view.

The leaders reared, the postillions swore, the driver snapped his whip furiously. The passengers in "coupe," "rotonde," and "interieure" popped out their heads, the passengers on the "banquette" stared, until at last, just as the postillions were dismounting to reconnoitre, twelve figures rose up from behind the barricade, indistinct in the gloom, and bringing their rifles to their shoulders took aim.

The driver yelled, the postillions shouted, the passengers shrieked. The three men in the banquette prepared for a fight. Suddenly a loud voice was heard from behind. They looked. A number of men stood there, and several more were leaping out from the thick woods on the right. They were surrounded. At length one of the men came forward from behind.

"You are at our mercy," said he. "Whoever gives up his money may go free. Whoever resists dies. Do you hear?"

Meanwhile the three men in the banquette had piled some trunks around, and prepared to resist till the last extremity. Dick was to fire; Buttons to keep each spare butt loaded; the Senator to use his crow-bar on the heads of any assailants. They waited in silence. They heard the brigands rummaging through the coach below, the prayers of the passengers, their appeals for pity, their groans at being compelled to give up every thing.

"The cowards don't deserve pity!" cried the Senator. "There are enough to get up a good resistance. We'll show fight, anyhow!"

IN THE COACH.

Scarcely had he spoke when three or four heads appeared above the edge of the coach.

"Haste!—your money!" said one.

"Stop!" said Buttons. "This gentleman is the American Plenipotentiary Extraordinary, who has just come from Florence, and is on his way to communicate with Garibaldi."

"Garibaldi!" cried the man, in a tone of deep respect.

"Yes," said Buttons, who had not miscalculated the effect of that mighty name. "If you harm us or plunder us you will have to settle your account with Garibaldi—that's all!"

The man was silent. Then he leaped down, and in another moment another man came.

"Which is the American Plenipotentiary Extraordinary?"

"He," said Buttons, pointing to the Senator.

"Ah! I know him. It is the same. I saw him at his reception in Florence, and helped to pull his carriage."

The Senator calmly eyed the brigand, who had respectfully taken off his hat.

"So you are going to communicate with Garibaldi at once. Go in peace! Gentlemen, every one of us fought under Garibaldi at Rome. Ten years ago he disbanded a large number of us among these mountains. I have the honor to inform you that ever since that time I have got my living out of the public, especially those in the service of the Government. You are different. I like you because you are Americans. I like you still better because you are friends of Garibaldi. Go in peace! When you see the General tell him Giuglio Malvi sends his respects."

And the man left them. In about a quarter of an hour the barricade was removed, and the passengers resumed their seats with lighter purses but heavier hearts. The diligence started, and once more went thundering along the mountain road.

"I don't believe we've seen the last of these scoundrels yet," said Buttons.

"Nor I," said Dick.

A general conversation followed. It was late, and but few things were visible along the road. About two hours passed away without any occurrence.

"Look!" cried Dick, suddenly.

They looked. About a quarter of a mile ahead a deep red glow arose above the forest, illumining the sky. The windings of the road prevented them from seeing the cause of it. The driver was startled, but evidently thought it was no more dangerous to go on than to stop. So he lashed up his horses and set them off at a furious gallop. The rumble of the ponderous wheels shut out all other sounds. As they advanced the light grew more vivid.

"I shouldn't wonder," said the Senator, "if we have another barricade here. Be ready, boys! We won't get off so easily this time."

The other two said not a word. On, and on. The report of a gun suddenly roused all. The driver lashed his horses. The postillions took the butts of their riding-whips and pelted the animals. The road took a turn, and, passing this, a strange scene burst upon their sight.

A wide, open space on the road-side, a collection of beams across the road, the shadowy forms of about thirty men, and the whole scene dimly lighted by a smouldering fire. As it blazed up a little the smoke rolled off and they saw an overturned carriage, two horses tied to a tree, and two men with their hands bound behind them lying on the ground.

A voice rang out through the stillness which for a moment followed the sudden stoppage of the coach at the barrier. There came a wail from the frightened passengers within — cries for mercy—piteous entreaties.

"Silence, fools!" roared the same voice, which seemed to be that of the leader.

"Wait! wait!" said the Senator to his companions. "Let me give the word."

A crowd of men advanced to the dilligence, and as they left the fire Buttons saw three figures left behind—two women and a man. They did not move. But suddenly a loud shriek

burst from one of the women. At the shriek Buttons trembled.

"The Spaniards! It is! I know the voice! My God!"

In an instant Buttons was down on the ground and in the midst of the crowd of brigands who surrounded the coach.

Bang! bang! bang! It was not the guns of the brigands, but Dick's pistol that now spoke, and its report was the signal of death to three men who rolled upon the ground in their last agonies. As the third report burst forth the Senator hurled himself down upon the heads of those below. The action of Buttons had broken up all their plans, rendered parley impossible, and left nothing for them to do but to follow him and save him. The brigands rushed at them with a yell of fury.

"Death to them! Death to them all! No quarter!"

"Help!" cried Buttons. "Passengers, we are armed! We can save ourselves!"

But the passengers, having already lost their money, now feared to lose their lives. Not one responded. All about the coach the scene became one of terrible confusion. Guns were fired, blows fell in every direction. The darkness, but faintly illuminated by the fitful firelight, prevented the brigands from distinguishing their enemies very clearly—a circumstance which favored the little band of Americans.

The brigands fired at the coach, and tried to break open the doors. Inside the coach the passengers, frantic with fear, sought to make their voices heard amid the uproar. They begged for mercy; they declared they had no money; they had already been robbed; they would give all that was left; they would surrender if only their lives were spared.

"And, oh! good Americans, yield, yield, or we all die!"

"Americans?" screamed several passionate voices. "Death to the Americans! Death to all foreigners!"

These bandits were unlike the last.

Seated in the banquette Dick surveyed the scene, while himself concealed from view. Calmly he picked out man after man and fired. As they tried to climb up the diligence, or to force open the door, they fell back howling. One man had the door partly broken open by furious blows with the butt of his gun. Dick fired. The ball entered his arm. He shrieked with rage. With his other arm he seized his gun, and again his blows fell crashing. In another instant a ball passed into his brain.

"Two shots wasted on one man! Too much!" muttered Dick; and taking aim again he fired at a fellow who was just leaping up the other side. The wretch fell cursing.

Again! again! again! Swiftly Dick's shots flashed around. He had now but one left in his pistol. Hurriedly he filled the spare chamber with six cartridges, and taking out the other he filled it and placed it in again. He looked down.

A FREE FIGHT.

There was the Senator. More than twenty men surrounded him, firing, swearing, striking, shrieking, rushing forward, trying to tear him from his post. For he had planted himself against the fore-part of the diligence, and the mighty arm whose strength had been so proved at Perugia was now descending again with irresistible force upon the heads of his assailants. All this was the work of but a few minutes. Buttons could not be seen. Dick's preparations were made. For a moment he waited for a favorable chance to get down. He could not stay up there any longer. He must stand by the Senator.

There stood the Senator, his giant form towering up amidst the mêlée, his muscular arms wielding the enormous iron bar, his astonishing strength increased tenfold by the excitement of the fight. He never spoke a word.

One after another the brigands went down before the awful descent of that iron bar. They clung together; they yelled in fury; they threw themselves *en masse* against the Senator. He met them as a rock meets a hundred waves. The remorseless iron bar fell only with redoubled fury. They raised their clubbed muskets in the air and struck at him. One sweep of the iron bar and the muskets were dashed out of their hands, broken or bent, to the ground. They fired, but from their wild excitement their aim was useless. In the darkness they struck at one another. One by one the number of his assailants lessened—they grew more furious but less bold. They fell back a little; but the Senator advanced as they retired, guarding his

DON'T SPEAK.

own retreat, but still swinging his iron bar with undiminished strength. The prostrate forms of a dozen men lay around. Again they rushed at him. The voice of their leader encouraged them and shamed their fears. He was a stout, powerful man, armed with a knife and a gun.

"Cowards! kill this one! This is the one! All the rest will yield if we kill him. Forward!"

That moment Dick leaped to the ground. The next instant the brigands leaped upon them. The two were lost in the crowd.

Twelve reports, one after the other, rang into the air. Dick did not fire till the muzzle of his pistol was against his enemy's breast. The darkness, now deeper than ever, prevented him from being distinctly seen by the furious crowd, who thought only of the Senator. But now the fire shooting up brightly at the sudden breath of a strong wind threw a lurid light upon the scene.

There stood Dick, his clothes torn, his face covered with blood, his last charge gone. There stood the Senator, his face blackened with smoke and dust, and red with blood, his colossal form erect, and still the ponderous bar swung on high to fall as terribly as ever. Before him were eight men. Dick saw it all in an instant. He screamed to the passengers in the diligence:

"There are only eight left! Come! Help us take them prisoners! Haste!"

The cowards in the diligence saw how things were. They plucked up courage, and at the call of Dick jumped out. The leader of the brigands was before Dick with uplifted rifle. Dick flung his pistol at his head. The brigand drew back and felled Dick senseless to the ground. The next moment the Senator's arm descended, and, with his head broken by the blow, the robber fell dead.

As though the fall of Dick had given him fresh fury, the Senator sprang after the others. Blow after blow fell. They were struck down helplessly as they ran. At this moment the passengers, snatching up the arms of the prostrate bandits, assaulted those who yet remained. They fled. The Senator pursued—long enough to give each one a parting blow hard enough to make him remember it for a month. When he returned the passengers were gathering around the coach, with the driver and postillions, who had thus far hidden themselves, and were eagerly looking at the dead.

"Off!" cried the Senator, in an awful voice—"Off! you white-livered sneaks! Let me find my two boys!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

BAD BRUISES, BUT GOOD MUSES.—THE HONORABLE SCARS OF DICK.—A KNOWLEDGE OF BONES.

THE Senator searched long and anxiously among the fallen bandits for those whom he affectionately called his "boys." Dick was first found. He was senseless.

The Senator carried him to the fire. He saw two ladies and a gentleman standing there. Hurriedly he called on them and pointed to Dick. The gentleman raised his arms. They were bound tightly. The ladies also were secured in a similar manner. The Senator quickly cut the cords from the gentleman, who in his turn snatched the knife and freed the ladies, and then went to care for Dick.

The Senator then ran back to seek for Buttons.

The gentleman flung a quantity of dry brush on the fire, which at once blazed up and threw a bright light over the scene. Meanwhile the passengers were looking anxiously around as though they dreaded a new attack. Some of them had been wounded inside the coach and were groaning and cursing.

The Senator searched for a long time in vain. At last at the bottom of a heap of fallen brigands, whom the Senator had knocked over, he found Buttons. His face and clothes were covered with blood, his forehead was blackened

as though by an explosion, his arm was broken and hung loosely as the Senator lifted him up. For a moment he thought that it was all over with him.

He carried him toward the fire. The appearance of the young man was terrible. He beckoned to one of the ladies. The lady approached. One look at the young man and the next instant, with a heart-rending moan, she flung herself on her knees by his side.

"The Spaniard!" said the Senator, recognizing her for the first time. "Ah! he'll be taken care of then."

There was a brook near by, and he hurried there for water. There was nothing to carry it in, so he took his beaver hat and filled it. Returning, he dashed it vigorously in Buttons's face. A faint sigh, a gasp, and the young man feebly opened his eyes. Intense pain forced a groan from him. In the hasty glance that he threw around he saw the face of Ida Francia as she bent over him bathing his brow, her face pale as death, her hand trembling, and her eyes filled with tears. The sight seemed to alleviate his pain. A faint smile crossed his lips. He half raised himself toward her.

"I've found you at last," he said, and that was all.

At this abrupt address a burning flush passed over the face and neck of the young girl. She bent down her head. Her tears flowed faster than ever.

"Don't speak," she said; "you are in too much pain."

She was right, for the next moment Buttons fell back exhausted.

The Senator drew a flask from his pocket and motioned to the young girl to give some to Buttons; and then, thinking that the attention of the Señorita would be far better than his, he hurried away to Dick.

So well had he been treated by the Don (whom the reader has of course already recognized) that he was now sitting up, leaning against the driver of the diligence, who was making amends for his cowardice during the fight by kind attention to Dick after it was over.

"My dear boy, I saw you had no bones broken," said the Senator, "and knew you were all right; so I devoted my first attention to Buttons. How do you feel?"

"Better," said Dick, pressing the honest hand which the Senator held out. "Better; but how is Buttons?"

"Recovering. But he is terribly bruised, and his arm is broken."

"His arm broken! Poor Buttons, what'll he do?"

"Well, my boy, I'll try what *I* can do. I've set an arm before now. In our region a necessary part of a good education was settin' bones."

Dick was wounded in several places. Leaving the Don to attend to him the Senator took his knife and hurriedly made some splints. Then getting his valise, he tore up two or three of his shirts. Armed with these he returned to Buttons. The Señorita saw the preparations, and, weeping bitterly, she retired.

"Your arm is broken, my poor lad," said the Senator. "Will you let me fix it for you? I can do it."

"Can you? Oh, then, I am all right! I was afraid I would have to wait till I got to Bologna."

"It would be a pretty bad arm by the time you got there, I guess," said the Senator. "But come—no time must be lost."

His simple preparations were soon made. Buttons saw that he knew what he was about. A few moments of excessive pain, which forced ill-suppressed moans from the sufferer, and the work was done.

After taking a sip from the flask both Buttons and Dick felt very much stronger. On questioning the driver they found that Bologna was not more than twenty miles away. The passengers were busily engaged in removing the barricade. It was decided that an immediate departure was absolutely necessary. At the suggestion of Dick, the driver, postillions, and passengers armed themselves with guns of the fallen brigands.

The severest wound which Dick had was on his head, which had been almost laid open by a terrific blow from the gun of the robber chief. He had also wounds on different parts of his body. Buttons had more. These the Senator bound up with such skill that he declared himself ready to resume his journey. Upon this the Don insisted on taking him into his own carriage. Buttons did not refuse.

At length they all started, the diligence ahead, the Don following. On the way the Don told Buttons how he had fared on the road. He had left Florence in a hired carriage the day before the diligence had left. He had heard nothing of the dangers of the road, and suspected nothing. Shortly after entering the mountain district they had been stopped and robbed of all their money. Still he kept on, thinking that there was no further danger. To his horror they were stopped again at the bridge, where the brigands, vexed at not getting any money, took all their baggage and let them go. They went on fearfully, every moment dreading some new misadventure. At length their worst fears were realized. At the place where the fight had occurred they were stopped and dragged from their carriage. The brigands were savage at not getting any plunder, and swore they would hold them prisoners till they procured a ransom, which they fixed at three thousand piastres. This was about four in the afternoon. They overturned the coach, kindled a fire, and waited for the diligence. They knew the rest.

Buttons, seated next to Ida Francia, forgot his sufferings. Meanwhile Dick and the Senator resumed their old seats on the banquette. After a while the Senator relapsed into a fit of musing, and Dick fell asleep.

Morning dawned and found them on the

plain once more, only a few miles from Bologna. Far ahead they saw the lofty Leaning Tower that forms so conspicuous an object in the fine old city. Dick awaked, and on looking at the Senator was shocked to see him very pale, with an expression of pain. He hurriedly asked the cause.

"Why, the fact is, after the excitement of fightin' and slaughterin' and seein' to you chaps was over I found that I was covered with wounds. One of my fingers is broken. I have three bullet wounds in my left arm, one in my right, a stab of a dirk in my right thigh, and a terrible bruise on my left knee. I think that some fellow must have passed a dagger through my left foot, for there is a cut in the leather, my shoe is full of blood, and it hurts dreadful. It's my opinion that the Dodge Club will be laid up in Bologny for a fortnight.—Hallo!"

The Senator had heard a cry behind, and looked out. Something startled him. Dick looked also.

The Don's carriage was in confusion. The two Señoritas were standing up in the carriage wringing their hands. The Don was supporting Buttons in his arms. He had fainted a second time.

USED UP.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SUFFERING AND SENTIMENT AT BOLOGNA.—MOONSHINE.—BEST BALM FOR WOUNDS.

They all put up at the same hotel. Buttons was carried in senseless, and it was long before he revived. The Senator and Dick were quite exhausted—stiff with fatigue, stiff with wounds.

There was one thing, however, which made their present situation more endurable. The war in Lombardy made further progress impossible. They could not be permitted to pass the borders into Venetia. Even if they had been perfectly well they would have been compelled to wait there for a time.

The city was in a ferment. The delight which the citizens felt at their new-found freedom was mingled with a dash of anxiety about the result of the war. For, in spite of Solferino, it was probable that the tide of victory would be hurled back from the Quadrilateral. Still they kept up their spirits; and the joy of their hearts found vent in songs, music, processions, Roman candles, *Te Deums*, sky-rockets, volleys of cannon, masses, public meetings, patriotic songs, speeches, tri-colors, and Italian versions of "The Marseillaise."

In a short time the Senator was almost as well as ever. Not so Dick. After struggling heroically for the first day against his pain he succumbed, and on the morning of the second was unable to leave his bed.

The Senator would not leave him. The kind attention which he had once before shown in Rome was now repeated. He spent nearly all his time in Dick's room, talking to him when he was awake, and looking at him when asleep. Dick was touched to the heart.

The Senator thought that, without exception, Bologna was the best Italian city that he had seen. It had a solid look. The people were not such everlasting fools as the Neapolitans, the Romans, and the Florentines, who thought that the highest end of life was to make pictures and listen to music. They devoted their energies to an article of nourishment which was calculated to benefit the world. He alluded to the famous *Bologna Sausage*, and he put it to Dick seriously, whether the manufacture of a sausage which was so eminently adapted to sustain life was not a far nobler thing than the production of useless pictures for the pampered tastes of a bloated aristocracy.

Meanwhile Buttons fared differently. If he had been more afflicted he was now more blessed. The Don seemed to think that the sufferings of Buttons were caused by himself, or, at any rate, by the eagerness of the young man to come to the assistance of his sisters. He felt grateful accordingly, and spared no pains to give him assistance and relief. He procured the best medical advice in the city. For several days the poor fellow lay in a very dangerous condition, hovering between life and death. His wounds were numerous and severe, and the excitement afterward, with the fatigue of the ride, had made his situation worse. But a strong constitution was on his side, and he at length was able to leave his bed and his room.

He was as pale as death, and woefully emaciated. But the society of the ladies acted like

a charm upon him; and from the moment when he left his room his strength came back rapidly.

He would have liked it still better if he had been able to see the younger sister alone; but that was impossible, for the sisters were inseparable. One evening, however, the Don offered to take them to the cathedral to see some ceremony. Ida declined, but the other eagerly accepted.

So Buttons for the first time in his life found himself alone with the maid of his heart. It was a solemn season.

Both were much embarrassed. Buttons looked as though he had something dreadful to tell; the Señorita as though she had something dreadful to hear. At length Buttons began to tell the story of his many searches, pursuits, wanderings, etc., in search of her, and particularly his last search at Florence, in which he had grown disheartened, and had made up his mind to follow her to Spain. At last he came to the time when he caught up to them on the road. He had seen them first. His heart told him that one of the ladies was Ida. Then he had lost all control of himself, and had leaped down to rescue her.

The Spanish nature is an impetuous, a demonstrative, a fiery nature. The Señorita was a Spaniard. As Buttons told all this in passionate words, to which his ardent love gave resistless eloquence, her whole manner showed that her heart responded. An uncontrollable excitement filled her being; her large, lustrous eyes, bright with the glow of the South, now beamed more luminously through her tears, and—in short: Buttons felt encouraged—and ventured nearer—and, almost before he knew it himself, somehow or other, his arm had got round a slender waist!

While the Señorita trembled—timidly drew back—and then all was still!—except, of course, whisperings—and broken sentences—and soft, sweet.....Well, all these were brought to an abrupt close by the return of the Don and his sister.

As they entered the room they saw Buttons at one end, and the Señorita at the other. The moonbeams stole in softly through the window.

"Why did you not call for a light?"

"Oh, it is so pleasant in the moonshine!"

At the end of a few weeks there came the great, the unlooked-for, the unhoped-for news—the Peace of Villafranca! So war was over. Moreover, the road was open. They could go wherever they wished.

Buttons was now strong enough to travel. Dick and the Senator were as well as ever. The news of the Peace was delightful to the travellers.

Not so, however, to the Bolognese. They railed at Napoleon. They forgot all that he had done, and taunted him with what he had neglected to do. They insulted him. They made caricatures of him. They spread scandalous reports about him. Such is the way of the world.

CHAPTER XLIX.

CROSSING INTO THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY.—CONSTERNATION OF THE CUSTOM-HOUSE OFFICERS.

The journey was a pleasant one. The Spaniards were an agreeable addition to the party in the estimation of others than Buttons. The Senator devoted himself particularly to the elder sister. Indeed, his acquaintance with *La Cica*, as he afterward confessed, had given him a taste for foreign ladies. He carried on little conversations with the Señorita in broken English. The Señorita's English was pretty, but not very idiomatic. The Senator imitated her English remarkably well, and no doubt did it out of compliment. He also astonished the company by speaking at the very top of a voice whose ordinary tone was far stronger than common.

The journey from Bologna to Ferrara was not diversified by any incident. Buttons was rapidly regaining his gayety and his strength. He wore his arm in a sling, it is true, but thought it better to have a broken arm with the Señorita than a sound one without her. It must be confessed, however, that his happiness was visible not so much in lively conversation as in his flushed cheek, glistening eye, and general air of ecstasy. Moreover, Ida could not speak English much—a conversation in that language was difficult, and they would not be

BUTTONS IN BLISS.

so rude to the Senator as to talk Spanish in his presence. The consequence was that the conversation flagged, and the Senator was by far the most talkative member of the company, and laid out all his strength in broken English.

Ferrara was reached at last, and they put up at a hotel which boasted of having entertained in its day any quantity of kings, emperors, and nobles of every European nation. It is an astonishing town. Vast squares, all desolate; great cathedrals, empty; proud palaces, neglected and ruinous; broad streets, grass-grown and empty; long rows of houses, without inhabitants; it presents the spectacle of a city dying without hope of recovery. The Senator walked through every street in Ferrara, looked carelessly at Tasso's dungeon, and seemed to feel relieved when they left the city.

On arriving at the Po, which forms the boundary between this district and Venetia, they underwent some examination from the authorities, but crossed without accident. But on the other side they found the Austrian officials far more particular. They asked a multiplicity of questions, opened every trunk, scanned the passports, and detained them long. The ladies were annoyed in a similar manner, and a number of Roman and Neapolitan trinkets which had passed the Italian *doganas* were now taken from them.

Dick had a valise, both compartments of which were strapped down carefully. Under a calm exterior he concealed a throbbing heart, for in that valise was the Doctor's pistol, upon which he relied in anticipation of future dangers. The officials opened the valise. It was apparently a puzzle to them. They found but little clothing. On the contrary, a very extensive assortment of articles wrapped in paper and labelled very neatly. These they opened one by one in the first compartment, and found the following:

1, Six collars; 2, a brick; 3, lump of lime; 4, pebbles; 5, plaster; 6, ashes; 7 paper; 8, another brick; 9, a chip; 10, more plaster; 11, more ashes; 12, an ink bottle; 13, three pair stockings; 14, more ashes; 15, more ashes; 16, a neck-tie; 17, a bit of wood; 18, vial; 19, some grass; 20, bone; 21, rag; 22, stone; 23, another stone; 24, some more grass; 25, more pebbles; 26, more bones; 27, pot of blacking; 28, slippers; 29, more stones; 30, more stones.

The officials started up with an oath apiece. Their heavy German faces confronted Dick with wrath and indignation, and every separate hair of their warlike mustaches stood out. However, they swallowed their rage, and turned to the others. Dick drew a long breath of relief. The pistol was safe. It had been taken apart and each piece wrapped in paper and labelled. Had he carried it about with him it would have been taken.

The Senator thought it was better to have three battles with brigands than one encounter with custom-house officials. He had a little store of specimens of Italian manufactures, which were all taken from him. One thing struck him forcibly, and that was the general superiority of the Austrian over the Roman side. There was more thrift, neatness, and apparent prosperity. His sentiments on this subject were embodied in a letter home, which he wrote from Padua on a dreary evening which they spent there before starting for Venice:

"If this part of Italy is oppressed by Austria, then all I can say is, that the pressure has squeezed an immense amount of vegetation out of the soil. Passing from the Roman territories into the Austrian is like going from darkness into light, or from Canada into the United States. What kind of people are these who do better under foreign rule than native? In my opinion, the territories of the Pope are worse than those of other rulers in Italy. A Spanish friend of mine tells me that it is because the thoughts of the Pope's subjects are set not on things below, but on things on high. He tells me that we've got to choose between two masters—Christianity on the one hand, and Mammon on the other. Whoever chooses the latter will be destitute of the former. He gives as examples of this France, England, and America, which countries, though possessed of the highest material blessings, are yet a prey to crime, scepticism, doubt, infidelity, heresy, false doctrine, and all manner of similar evils. Those nations which prefer religion to worldly prosperity present a different scene; and he points to Spain and Italy—poor, in this world's goods, but rich in faith—the only evils which afflict them being the neighborhood of unbelieving nations."

CHAPTER L.

VENICE AND ITS PECULIAR GLORY.—THE DODGE CLUB COME TO GRIEF AT LAST.—UP A TREE.—IN A NET, ETC.

Few sensations are so singular as that which the traveller experiences on his first approach to Venice. The railway passes for miles through swamps, pools, ponds, and broken mud banks, till at length, bursting away altogether from the shore, it pushes directly out into the sea. Away goes the train of cars over the long viaduct, and the traveller within can scarcely understand the situation. The firm and even roll and the thunder of the wheels tell of solid ground beneath; but outside of the windows on either side there is nothing but a wide expanse of sea.

At length the city is reached. The train stops, and the passenger steps out into the station-house. But what a station-house! and what a city! There is the usual shouting from carriers and cabmen, but none of that deep roar of a large city which in every other place drones heavily into the traveller's ear.

Going out to what he thinks is a street, the traveller finds merely a canal. Where are the carriages, cabs, calèches, hand-carts, barouches, pony-carriages, carryalls, wagons, hansoms, hackneys, wheelbarrows, broughams, dog-carts, buggies? Where are the horses, mares, dogs, pigs, ponies, oxen, cows, cats, colts, calves, and live-stock generally?

Nowhere. There's not a wheeled carriage in the place. It may be doubted if there is a dog. There certainly is not a cow. The people use goats' milk. The horse is as unknown as the pterodactyl, icthyosaurus, dodo, iguanodon, mastodon, great awk. How do they go about? Where are the conveniences for moving to and fro?

Then, at the platform of the station, a score or two of light gondolas await you. The gon-

DICK'S LUGGAGE.

dolier is the cabman. He waits for you, with his hand toward you, and the true "Keb, Sir!" tone and smile. A double-sized gondola is here called an "omnibus," and the name is painted on the side in huge letters. And these are the substitutes for wheeled vehicles.

Now after entering one of these you go along smoothly and noiselessly. The first thing one notices in Venice is the absence of noise. As the boat goes along the only sound that is heard is the sharp cry from the boatman as he approaches a corner. At first the novelty interests the mind, afterward it affects the spirits. In three days most people leave the city in a kind of panic. The stillness is awful. A longer stay would reduce one to a state of melancholy madness. A few poets, however, have been able to endure, and even to love, the sepulchral stillness of the city. But to appreciate Venice one must be strongly poetical.

There are many things to be seen. First of all, there is the city itself, one grand curiosity, unique, with nothing on earth that bears a distant approach to it. Its canals, gondolas, antique monuments, Byzantine architecture, bridges, mystery: its pretty women with black lace veils, the true glory of Venice—though Murray says nothing about them.

For Murray, in what was meant to be an exhaustive description of Venice, has omitted all mention of that which makes it what it is. Whereas if it had been Homer instead of Murray he would have rolled out the following epithets: *ὑπλόκαμοι, ἀπαλαί, χοροπθεῖς, ὑόκομοι, ῥοδοπηχέες, ἐρατειναί, καλλιπλόκαμοι, ἐλκεχίτωνες, κυανώπιδες, καλιώπιδες, ἱμερόεσσαι, βαθύκολποι, λεγύμολποι: κ. τ. λ.*

The travellers visited the whole round of sights. They remained in company and went about in the same gondola. The Senator admired what he saw as much as any of them, though it appeared to be out of his particular line. It was not the Cathedral of St. Mark's, however, nor the Doge's Palace, nor the Court of the Inquisition, nor the Bridge of Sighs, nor the Rialto, that interested him, but rather the spectacle of all these magnificent edifices around him, with all the massive masonry of a vast city, built up laboriously on the uncertain sand. He admired the Venetians who had done this. To such men, he thought, the commerce of the world might well have belonged. In discussing the causes of the decline of Venice he summed up the subject in a few words, and in the clearest possible manner.

"These Venetians, when they set up shop, were in the principal street of the world—the Mediterranean. They had the best stand in the street. They did work up their business uncommon well now, and no mistake. They made money hand over fist, and whatever advantage could be given by energy, capital, and a good location, they got. But the currents of traffic change in the world just as they do in a city. After a while it passed in another direction. Venice was thrown out altogether. She had no more chance than a New York shop would have after the business that it lived on had gone into another street. Hence," said the Senator—he always said "hence" when he was coming to a

triumphant conclusion—"hence the downfall of Venice."

On arriving at their hotel a little circumstance occurred which made them look at Venice from a new and startling point of view. On going to their rooms after dinner they were followed by a file of Austrian soldiers. They wanted to see the passports. They requested this in a thick guttural tone, which made the Americans feel quite nervous. They showed the passports nevertheless.

On looking over them the Austrian soldiers arrested them. They were informed that if they went peaceably they would be well treated, but if they made any resistance they would all be bound.

The Americans remonstrated. No use. A thousand conjectures were made as to the cause of their arrest, but they were completely baffled. Before they could arrive at any conclusion they had arrived at the place of their destination, to which they had, of course, been taken in a gondola. It was too dark to distinguish the place, but it looked like a large and gloomy edifice. The soldiers took them to a room, where they locked them all in together. It was a comfortable apartment, with another larger one opening from it, in which were two beds and two couches. Evidently they were not neglected.

After waiting for half the night in a kind of fever they retired to rest. They slept but little. They rose early, and at about seven o'clock breakfast was brought in to them, with a guard of soldiers following the waiters.

After breakfast they were visited again. This time it was a legal gentleman. They did not know who he was, but he gave them to understand that he was a person high in authority. He questioned them very closely as to their business in Venice, but did his questioning in a courteous manner. After about an hour he left.

Lunch was brought in at one o'clock. Their feelings at being treated in this mysterious manner can be imagined. Such neglect of the rights of man—such trifling with his time and patience—such utter disregard of *habeas corpus*, awaked indignation which words could not express.

Positively they were treated like dumb cattle;

ARRESTED.

locked up, fed, deprived of liberty and fresh air; no communication with friends outside; and, worst of all, no idea in the world of the cause of their imprisonment. They came to the conclusion that they were mistaken for some other parties — for some *Cacciatori degli Alpi*; and Buttons insisted that the Senator was supposed to be Garibaldi himself. In these troublous times any idea, however absurd, might be acted upon.

At about three in the afternoon the door was thrown open, and a file of soldiers appeared. An officer approached and requested the prisoners to follow. They did so. They passed along many halls, and at length came to a large room. A long table extended nearly from one end to another. Soldiers were arranged down the sides of the apartment.

At the head of the table sat an elderly man, with a stern face, ferocious mustache, sharp eye, bushy gray eyebrows, and universal air of Mars. His uniform showed him to be a General. By his side was their visitor of the morning. Officials sat at the table.

"*Silence!*"

SILENCE!

CHAPTER LI.

THE AMERICAN EAGLE AND THE AUSTRIAN DOUBLE-HEADED DITTO.

At the command of the Austrian General every body became still. Thereupon he motioned to the prisoners to stand at the bottom of the table. They did so. The General took a long stare at the prisoners, particularly at the Senator. They bore it steadily. As for the Senator, he regarded the other with an expression which would have done honor to the Austrian General's own father.

"Who are you?"

The General spoke in German. The legal gentleman at his side instantly interpreted it into English.

"Americans."

"Ah! dangerous characters—dangerous characters! What is your business?"

"Travellers."

"Travellers? Ah! But what are your occupations in America?"

"Our passports tell."

"Your passports say—'Gentlemen.'"

"Well, we *are* gentlemen."

The Austrian looked blank. After a while he resumed; and as he directed his glance to the Senator the latter made all the replies, while the Interpreter served as a medium of communication.

"How long have you been in Italy?"

"Two or three months."

"You came here just about the commencement of these difficulties?"

"Yes—the beginning of the war."

"Where did you land?"

"At Naples."

"Naples? Ha! hm! Where did you go next?"

"To Rome. We stayed there a few weeks and then went to Florence; from Florence to Bologna, and thence through Ferrara and Padua to Venice."

"You went to Florence! How long ago did you leave?"

"About a month ago."

"A month! Ah, hm!"

And the General exchanged glances with the legal gentleman at his side.

"What were you doing in Florence?"

"Seeing the city."

"Did you place yourselves in connection with the Revolutionists?"

"No."

"Did you have any thing to do with the emissaries of Garibaldi?"

"Nothing."

"Take care how you deny."

"We say we know nothing at all either of the Revolutionists or Imperialists or Garibaldians or any other party. We are merely travellers."

"Hm—a strong disavowment," said the General to himself. "You have never in any way countenanced the rebels."

"No."

"Think before you speak."

"We are free Americans. Perhaps you know that the citizens of that country say what they think and do what they like. We have gone on that rule in Italy. What I say is, that we do not know any thing about rebels or any political parties in the country."

"Do you know *La Cica?*" asked the General, with the air of a man who was putting a home-thrust, and speaking with uncommon fierceness.

"I do," said the Senator, mildly.

"You know her well? You are one of her intimate friends?"

"Am I?'

"Are you not?"

"I am friendly with her. She is an estimable woman, with much feeling and penetration"—and a fond regret exhibited itself in the face of the speaker.

"Well, Sir, you may as well confess. We know you, Sir. We know you. You are one of the chosen associates of that infamous Garibaldian plotter and assassin, whose hotel is the hot-bed of conspiracy and revolution. We know you. Do you dare to come here and deny it?"

"I did not come here; I was brought. I do not deny that you know me, though I haven't the pleasure of knowing you. But I do deny that I am the associate of conspirators."

"Are you not the American whom *La Cica* so particularly distinguished with her favor?"

"I have reason to believe that she was partial to me—somewhat."

"He confesses!" said the General. "You came from her to this place, communicating on the way with her emissaries."

"I communicated on the way with none but brigands among the mountains. If they were her emissaries I wish her joy of them. My means of communication," said the Senator, while a grim smile passed over his face, "was an iron crow-bar, and my remarks left some deep impression on them, I do believe."

"Tell me now—and tell me truly," said the General after a pause, in which he seemed trying to make out whether the Senator was joking or not. "To whom are you sent in this city?"

"To no one."

"Sir! I warn you that I will not be trifled with."

"I tell you," said the Senator, with no apparent excitement, "I tell you that I have come here to no one. What more can I say?"

"You must confess."

"I have nothing to confess."

"Sir! you have much to confess," cried the General, angrily, "and I swear to you I will wring it out of you. Beware how you trifle with my patience. If you wish to regain your liberty confess at once, and you may escape your just punishment. But if you refuse, then, by the immortal gods, I'll shut you up in a dungeon for ten years!"

"You will do no such thing."

"What!" roared the General. "Won't I?"

"You will not. On the contrary, you will have to make apologies for these insults."

"I!—Apologies! Insults!"

The General gnawed his mustache, and his eyes blazed in fury.

"You have arrested us on a false charge, based on some slanderous or stupid information of some of your infernal spies," said the Senator. "What right have you to pry into the private affairs of an American traveller? We have nothing to do with you."

"You are associated with conspirators. You are charged with treasonable correspondence with rebels. You countenanced revolution in Florence. You openly took part with Republicans. You are a notorious friend of *La Cica*. And you came here with the intention of fomenting treason in Venice!"

"Whoever told you that," replied the Senator, "told infernal lies—most infernal lies. I am no emissary of any party. I am a private traveller."

"Sir, we have correspondents in Florence on whom we can rely better than on you. They watched you."

"Then the best thing you can do is to dismiss those correspondents and get rogues who have half an idea."

"Sir, I tell you that they watched you well. You had better confess all. Your antecedents in Florence are known. You are in a position of imminent danger. I tell you—*beware!*"

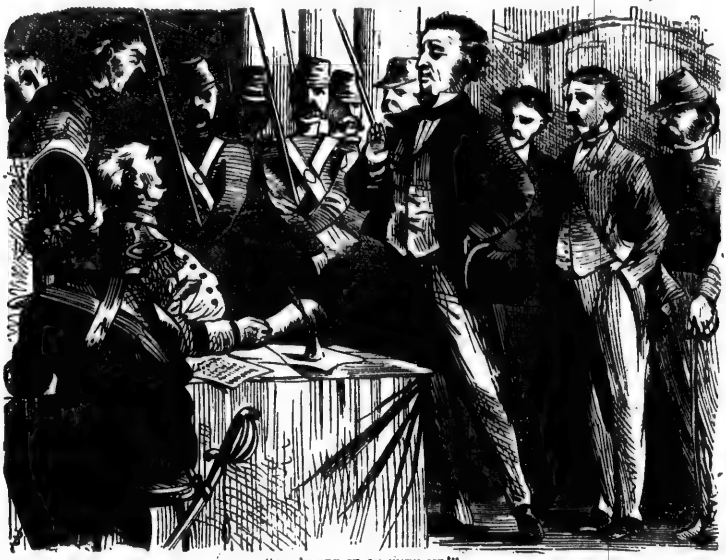
The General said this in an awful voice, which was meant to strike terror into the soul of his captive. The Senator looked back into his eyes with an expression of calm scorn. His form seemed to grow larger, and his eyes dilated as he spoke:

"Then you, General, I tell you—*beware!* Do you know who you've got hold of?—No conspirator; no infernal Italian bandit, or Dutchman either; but an American citizen. Your Government has already tried the temper of Americans on one or two remarkable occasions. Don't try it on a third time, and don't try it on with me. Since you want to know who I am I'll tell you. I, Sir, am an American Senator. I take an active and prominent part in the government of that great and glorious country. I represent a constituency of several hundred thousand. You tell me to *beware*. I tell you—BEWARE! for, by the Eternal! if you don't let me go, I swear to you that you'll have to give me up at the cannon's mouth. I swear to you if you don't let me off by evening I won't go at all till I am delivered up with humble and ample apologies, both to us and to our country, whom you have insulted in our persons."

"Sir, you are bold!"

"Bold! Send for the American Consul of this city and see if he don't corroborate this. But you had better make haste, for if you subject me to further disgrace it will be the worse for [redacted] Government, and particularly for *you*, my [redacted]. You'll have the town battered down about your ears. Don't get another nation down on you, and, above all, don't let that nation be the American. What I tell you is the solemn truth, and if you don't mind it you will know it some day to your sorrow."

Whatever the cause may have been the company present, including even the General, were



"DON'T TRY IT ON WITH ME!"

impressed by the Senator's words. The announcement of his dignity; the venerable title of Senator; the mention of his "constituency," a word the more formidable from not being at all understood—all combined to fill them with respect and even awe.

So at his proposal to send for the American Consul the General gave orders to a messenger who went off at once in search of that functionary.

CHAPTER LII.

THE SENATOR STILL ENGAGED IN FACING DOWN THE AUSTRIAN.—THE AMERICAN CONSUL.—UNEXPECTED RE-APPEARANCE OF FORGOTTEN THINGS.—COLLAPSE OF THE COURT.

THE American Consul soon made his appearance. Not having had any thing to do for months, the prospect of business gave wings to his feet. Moreover, he felt a very natural desire to help a countryman in trouble. Upon entering the hall he cast a rapid look around, and seemed surprised at so august a tribunal. For in the General's martial form he saw no less a person than the Austrian Commandant.

The Consul bowed and then looked at the prisoners. As his eye fell upon the Senator it lighted up, and his face assumed an expression of the most friendly interest. Evidently a recognition. The Austrian Commandant addressed the Consul directly in German.

"Do you know the prisoners?"

"I know one of them."

"He is here under a very heavy accusation. I have well-substantiated charges by which he is implicated in treason and conspiracy. He has been connected with Revolutionists of the worst stamp in Florence, and there is strong proof that he has come here to communicate with Revolutionists in this city."

"Who accuses him of this? Are they here?"

"No, but they have written from Florence warning me of his journey here."

"Does the prisoner confess?"

"Of course not. He denies. He requested me to send for you. I don't want to be unjust, so if you have any thing to say, say on."

"These charges are impossible."

"Impossible?"

"He is altogether a different man from what you suppose. He is an eminent member of the American Senate. Any charges made against one like him will have to be well substantiated; and any injury done to him will be dangerous in the highest degree. Unless you have undeniable proofs of his guilt it will be best to free him at once—or else—"

"Or else what?"

"Or else there will be very grave complications."

The Commandant looked doubtful. The others impassive. Buttons and Dick interested. The Senator calm. Again the Commandant turned to the Senator, his remarks being interpreted as before.

"How does it happen that you were so particularly intimate with all the Revolutionists in Florence, and an habitué of *La Cisa's* salon? that your mission was well known throughout

by which he is
racy. He has
ts of the worst
strong proof
cate with Rev-

re they here?"
from Florence

He requested
t to be unjust,
ay on."
."

han from what
member of the
made against
substantiated;
be dangerous
ou have unde-
be best to free

ave complica-

oubtful. The
Dick interested.
Commandant
s being inter-

n were so par-
volutionists in
Cica's salon?
rn throughout

the city? that you publicly acknowledged the Florentine rebellion in a speech? that the people carried you home in triumph? and that immediately before leaving you received private instructions from *La Cica?*"

"To your questions," said the Senator, with unabated dignity, "I will reply in brief: *First*, I am a free and independent citizen of the great and glorious American Republic. If I associated with Revolutionists in Florence, I did so because I am accustomed to choose my own society, and not to recognize any law or any master that can forbid my doing so. I deny, however, that I was in any way connected with plots, rebellions, or conspiracies. *Secondly*, I was friendly with the Countess because I considered her a most remarkably fine woman, and because she showed a disposition to be friendly with me—a stranger in a strange land. *Thirdly*, I have no mission of any kind whatever. I am a traveller for self-improvement. I have no business political or commercial. So that my mission could not have been known. If people talked about me they talked nonsense. *Fourthly*, I confess I made a speech, but what of that? It's not the first time, by a long chalk. I don't know what you mean by 'acknowledging.' As a private citizen I congratulated them on their success, and would do so again. If a crowd calls on me for a speech, I'm thar! The people of Florence dragged me home in a carriage. Well, I don't know why they did so. I can't help it if people will take possession of me and pull me about. *Fifthly*, and lastly, I had an interview with the Countess, had I? Well, is it wrong for a man to bid good-bye to a friend? I ask you, what upon earth do you mean by such a charge as that? Do you take me for a puling infant?"

"On that occasion," said the Commandant, "she taught you some mysterious words which were to be repeated among the Revolutionists here."

"Never did any thing of the kind. That's a complete full-blown fiction."

"I have the very words."

"That's impossible. You've got hold of the wrong man I see."

"I will have them read," said the General, solemnly.

And he beckoned to the Interpreter. Whereupon the Interpreter gravely took out a formidable roll of papers from his breast, and opened it. Every gesture was made as though his hand was heavy with the weight of crushing proof. At last a paper was produced. The Interpreter took one look at the prisoner, then glanced triumphantly at the Consul, and said:

"It is a mysterious language with no apparent meaning, nor have I been able to find the key to it in any way. It is very skillfully made, for all the usual tests of cipher writing fail in this. The person who procured it did not get near enough till the latter part of the interview, so that he gained no explanation whatever from the conversation."

"Read," said the Commandant. The Senator waited, wonderingly. The Interpreter read:

"*Ma ouillina sola ouda ste ensoce fremeadis ansit assalef a ous tu a'fa lastinna belis.*"

Scarcely had the first words been uttered in the Italian voice of the reader than the Senator started as though a shot had struck him. His face flushed. Finally a broad grin spread itself over his countenance, and down his neck, and over his chest, and over his form, and into his boots, till at last his whole colossal frame shook with an earthquake of laughter.

The Commandant stared and looked uneasy. All looked at the Senator—all with amazement—the General, the Interpreter, the Officials, the Guards, Buttons, Dick, and the American Consul.

"Oh dear! Oh *de-ar!* Oh DEEE-AR!" cried the Senator, in the intervals of his outrageous peals of laughter. "OH!" and a new peal followed.

What did all this mean? Was he crazy? Had misfortunes turned his brain?

But at last the Senator, who was always remarkable for his self-control, recovered himself. He asked the Commandant if he might be permitted to explain.

"Certainly," said the Commandant, dolefully. He was afraid that the thing would take a ridiculous turn, and nothing is so terrible as that to an Austrian official.

"Will you allow me to look at the paper?" asked the Senator. "I will not injure it at all."

The Interpreter politely carried it to him as the Commandant nodded. The Senator beckoned to the Consul. They then walked up to the Commandant. All four looked at the paper.

"You see, gentlemen," said the Senator, drawing a lead pencil from his pocket, "the Florence correspondent has been too sharp. I can explain all this at once. I was with the Countess, and we got talking of poetry. Now, I don't know any more about poetry than a horse."

"Well?"

"Well, she insisted on my making a quotation. I had to give in. The only one I could think of was a line or two from Watts."

"*Watts?* Ah! I don't know him," said the Interpreter.

"He was a minister—a parson."

"Ah!"

"So I said it to her, and she repeated it. These friends of yours, General, have taken it down, but their spellin' is a little unusual," said the Senator, with a tremendous grin that threatened a new outburst.

"Look. Here is the true key which this gentleman tried so hard to find."

And taking his pencil the Senator wrote under the strange words the true meaning:

"*My willing soul would stay*
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss."

The Interpreter saw it all. He looked pro-

WATTS MIS-SPELLED.

foundly foolish. The whole thing was clear. The Senator's innocence was plain. He turned to explain to the Commandant. The Consul's face exhibited a variety of expressions, over which a broad grimace finally predominated, like sunshine over an April sky. In a few words the whole was made plain to the Commandant. He looked annoyed, glared angrily at the Interpreter, tossed the papers on the floor, and rose to his feet.

"Give these gentlemen our apologies," said he to the Interpreter. "In times of trouble, when States have to be held subject to martial law, proceedings are abrupt. Their own good sense will, I trust, enable them to appreciate the difficulty of our position. They are at liberty."

At liberty! No sooner were the words spoken than the prisoners bowed and left, in company with the Consul, who eagerly shook hands with all three, particularly the Senator, who, as they were leaving, was heard to whisper something in which these words were audible:

"Watts, old hoss! The American eagle [illegible] it claws, anyhow."

CHAPTER LIII.

A MYSTERIOUS FLIGHT.—DESPAIR OF BUTTONS.—PURSUIT.—HISTORIC GROUND, AND HISTORIC CITIES.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening when they reached their hotel. Every thing was as they had left it. Some trifles had occurred, such as a general overhaul of the baggage, in which the Doctor's pistol had again miraculously escaped seizure. Buttons went immediately to call on the Spaniards, but their apartment was closed. Supposing that they were out about the town, he returned to his friends.

During their memorable captivity they had eaten but little, and now nothing was more welcome than a dinner. So they ordered the very best that the hotel could supply, and made the American Consul stay. Buttons did not give himself up so completely as the rest to the hilarity of the occasion. Something was on his mind. So he took advantage of a conversation in which the Senator was giving the Consul an animated description of the fight with the brigands, and the pluck of his two "boys," and stole out of the room. Whereupon the Senator stopped and remarked—

"Hang these fellows that are in love!"

"Certainly," said Dick. "They often hang themselves, or feel like it."

"Of course Buttons is on his usual errand."

"Of course."

"It seems to me that his foreign travel has become nothing but one long chase after that gal. He is certainly most uncommon devoted."

Scarce had these words been spoken when the door was flung open, and Buttons made his appearance, much agitated.

"What's the matter?" cried Dick. "The Spaniards!" "Well?" "They're off!" "Off?" "Gone!" "Where?" "Away from Venice." "When?" "I don't know." "Why?" "I don't know."

"What sent them? It looks as though they were running away from you on purpose."

"They're off, at any rate," cried Buttons. "I went to their room. It was open. The servants were fixing it up. I asked why. They said the Spaniards had left Venice early this morning. They did not know any thing more."

"Strange!"

"Strange, [illegible] It's so sudden [illegible] their plans were [illegible] week in Venice."

"Perhaps they were frightened at our adventure."

Buttons sprung to the bell and pulled it vigorously. Then he rushed to the door and flung it open. Five or six waiters came tumbling in. They had all been listening at the key-hole.

"Where's the chief waiter?"

"Here," said that functionary, approaching.

"Come here. You may retire," said Buttons to the others. They went out reluctantly.

"Now, my friend," said he, putting some piastres in the hand of the chief waiter. "Think, and answer me right. Where are the Spaniards—a gentleman and two ladies—who came here with us?"

"They have left the city."

"When?"

"At six this morning, by the first train."

"Why did they leave?"

"A hint came from the Commandant."

"From him. Ah! What about?"

"Why—you know—your Excellencies were waited on by a deputation."

"We were arrested. Well?"

"Well, these Spaniards were friends of yours."

"Yes."

"That connection made them suspected."

"Diavolo!"

"Such is the melancholy fact. There was no cause strong enough to lead to their arrest. It would have been inconvenient. So the Commandant sent a message, immediately after your Excellency's lamentable arrest, to warn them—"

"What of?"

"That they had better leave the country at once."

"Yes, but that didn't force them to go."

"Ah, Signore! Do you not know what such a warning is? There is no refusal."

"And so they left."

"At six by the train."

"Where to?"

"Signore, they had their passports made out for Milan."

"Milan!"

"Certainly. It was necessary for them not only to leave Venice, but Venetia."

"Very well. When does the next train leave?"

"Not till to-morrow morning at six."

"You must call us then at five, for we are going. Here, take our passports and get them visèd;" and having explained matters to the Senator, Buttons found no need of persuasion to induce them to quit the city, so the passports were handed over to the waiter.

So at six the next morning they went flying over the sea, over the lagoons, over the marshes, over the plains, away toward Lombardy.

They had to stop for a while at Verona, waiting to comply with "some formalities." They had time to walk about the town and see the Roman ruins and the fortifications. Of all these much might be said, if it were not to be found already in Guide-books, Letters of Correspondents, Books of Travel, Gazetteers, and Illustrated Newspapers. Our travellers saw enough of the mighty military works, in a brief survey, to make them thoroughly comprehend the Peace of Villafranca. In the neighborhood of Solferino they left the train to inspect the scene of battle. Only a month had passed since the terrific contest, and the traces remained visible on every side. The peasants had made two trenches of enormous size. In one of these the bodies of the Austrians had been buried, in the other those of the French and Italians. In one place there was a vast heap of arms, which had been gathered from off the field. There was no piece among them which was not bent or broken. All were of the best construction and latest pattern, but had seen their day. Shattered trees, battered walls, crumbling houses, deep ruts in the earth, appeared on every side to show where the battle had raged; yet already the grass, in its swift growth, had obliterated the chief marks of the tremendous conflict.

FORMALITIES.

I

At length they arrived at Milan. The city presented a most imposing appearance. Its natural situation, its magnificent works of architecture, its stately arches and majestic avenues presented an appearance which was now heightened by the presence of victory. It was as though the entire population had given themselves up to rejoicing. The evil spirit had been cast out, and the house thoroughly swept and garnished. The streets were filled with gay multitudes; the avenues resounded with the thrilling strains of the Marseillaise, repeated everywhere; every window displayed the portrait of Napoleon, Victor Emanuel, or Garibaldi, and from every house-top flaunted the tri-color. The heavy weight imposed by the military rule—the iron hand, the cruelty, the bands of spies, the innumerable soldiers sent forth by Austria—had been lifted off, and in the first reaction of perfect liberty the whole population rushed into the wildest demonstrations of joy and gayety. The churches were all marked by the perpetual presence of the emblems of Holy Peace, and Heavenly Faith, and Immortal Hope. The sublime Cathedral, from all its marble population of sculptured saints and from all its thousands of pinnacles, sent up one constant song. Through the streets marched soldiers—regular, irregular, horse, foot, and dragoons; cannon thundered at intervals through every day; volunteer militia companies sprang up like butterflies to flash their gay uniforms in the sun.

It was not the season for theatres. *La Scala* had opened for a few nights when Napoleon and Victor Emanuel where here, but had closed again. Not so the smaller theatres. Less dignified, they could burst forth unrestrained. Especially the Day Theatres, places formed somewhat on the ancient model, with open roofs. In these the spectators can smoke. Here the performance begins at five or six and ends at dark. All the theatres on this season, day or night alike, burst forth into joy. The war was the universal subject. Cannon, fighting, soldiers, gunpowder, saltpetre, sulphur, fury, explosions, wounds, bombardments, grenadiers, artillery, drum, gun, trumpet, blunderbuss, and thunder! Just at that time the piece which was having the greatest run was THE VICTORY of SOLFERINO!

Two theatres exhibited this piece with all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war. Another put out in a pantomime "The Battle of Malegnano!"

Another, "The Fight at Magenta!" But perhaps the most popular of all was "GARIBALDI IN VARESE, *od* I CACCIATORI DEGLI ALPI!"

CHAPTER LIV.

DICK MEETS AN OLD FRIEND.—THE EMOTIONAL NATURE OF THE ITALIAN.—THE SENATOR OVERCOME AND DUMBFOUNDED.

THE day of their arrival at Milan was distinguished by a pleasing circumstance. Buttons found the Spaniards, and was happy. And by another circumstance, scarcely less pleasing, Dick found an old acquaintance.

On this wise:

Finding himself in Milan he suddenly called to mind an old friend with whom he had been intimate in Boston. He had been exiled from Italy on account of his connection with the movements of 1848. He had fled to America, and had taken with him barely enough to live on. For five years he had lived in Boston under the plain name of *Hugh Airey*. Then Dick met with him, and had been attracted by the polished manners, melancholy air, and high spirit of the unfortunate exile. In the course of time their acquaintance ripened into intimate friendship. Dick introduced him to all his friends, and did all in his power to make his life pleasant. From him he had learned Italian, and under his guidance formed a wide and deep acquaintance with Italian literature. In 1858 Mr. Airey decided to return to Italy and live in Turin till the return of better days. Before leaving he confided to Dick the fact that he belonged to one of the oldest families in Lombardy, and that he was the Count Ugo di Gonfaloniere. The exile bade Dick and all his friends good-bye and departed. Since then Dick had heard from him but once. The Count was happy, and hopeful of a speedy return of better days for his country. His hopes had been realized, as the world knows.

THE COUNT UGO.

Dick had no difficulty in finding out where he lived, and went to call on him. It was a magnificent palace. Throngs of servants were around the entrance. Dick sent up his name, and was conducted by a servant to an antechamber. Scarcely had he finished a hasty survey of the apartment when hurried footsteps were heard. He turned. The Count came rushing into the room, flushed and trembling, and without a word threw himself into Dick's arms, embraced him, and kissed him. It was a trying moment for Dick. Nothing is so frightful to a man of the Anglo-Saxon race as to be hugged and kissed by a man. However, Dick felt deeply touched at the emotion of his friend and his grateful remembrance of himself.

"This is a circumstance most unexpected!" cried the Count. "Why did you not write and tell me that you were coming, my dearest friend? I did not know that you were in Italy. But perhaps you wished to give me a surprise?" And then the Count asked after all the friends in America, for whom he still evinced the tenderest attachment.

On being questioned he related his own subsequent adventures. After leaving America he went at once to Turin. Though proscribed in Lombardy he was free in Piedmont. He managed to communicate secretly with his relatives in Milan, and lived comfortably. At length he became aware of the great movement on foot which ended in the Italian war. He had thrown himself altogether in the good cause, and, without being at all disheartened by his former misfortunes, he embarked energetically in the current of events. He was at once recognized by

the Sardinian Government as a powerful recruit, and appointed to an important military command. Finally war was declared. The French came, the Count had taken a conspicuous part in the events of the war, had been present at every battle, and had been promoted for his gallant conduct. Fortunately he had not once been wounded.

On the occupation of Milan by the Allies he had regained all his rights, titles, privileges, and estates. He was a happy man. His ten years of exile had given him a higher capacity for enjoyment. He looked forward to a life of honor and usefulness. He had found joy harder to endure than grief; the reunion with all his old friends and relations, the presence of all the familiar scenes of his native land had all well-nigh overcome him. Yet he assured Dick that no friend with whom he had met was more welcome to his sight than he, and the joy that he felt at seeing him had only been exceeded once in his life—that one time having been on the occasion of the entrance of the Allies into Milan.

And now that he was here, where was his luggage? Did he come without it? There was certainly only one place in the city where he could stop. He must remain nowhere else but here. Dick modestly excused himself. He was scarcely prepared. He was travelling in company with friends, and would hardly like to leave them. The Count looked reproachfully at him. Did he hesitate about that? Why, his friends also must come. He would have no refusal. They all must come. They would be as welcome as himself. He would go with Dick to his hotel in person and bring his friends there.

In a short time the Count and Dick had driven to the hotel, where the former pressed upon the Senator and Buttons an invitation to his house. They were not allowed to refuse, but were taken away, and before they fairly understood the unexpected occurrence they were all installed in magnificent apartments in the Palazzo Gonfaloniere.

Buttons's acquaintance with the language, literature, manners, and customs of Italy made him appreciate his advantages; the friendship of the Count prevented Dick from feeling otherwise than perfectly at home; and as for the Senator, if it had been possible for him to feel otherwise, his experience of high life at Florence would have enabled him to bear himself serenely here. His complete self-possession, his unfaltering gaze, his calm countenance, were never for a moment disturbed.

The Count had been long enough in America to appreciate a man of the stamp of the Senator; he therefore from the very first treated him with marked respect, which was heightened when Dick told him of the Senator's achievements during the past few weeks. The brilliant society which surrounded the Count was quite different from that which the Senator had found in Florence. The people were equally cultivated, but more serious. They had less excitability, but more deep feeling. Milan, indeed, had borne her burden far differently from Florence. Both hated the foreigner; but the latter could be gay, and smiling, and trifling even under her chains; this the former could never be. The thoughtful, earnest, and somewhat pensive Milanese was more to the Senator's taste than the brilliant and giddy Florentine. These, thought he, may well be a free people.

Moreover, the Senator visited the Grand Cathedral, and ascended to the summit. Arriving there his thoughts were not taken up by the innumerable statues of snow-white marble, or the countless pinnacles of exquisite sculpture that extended all around like a sacred forest filled with saints and angels, but rather to the scene that lay beyond.

There spread away a prospect which was superior in his eyes to any thing that he had ever seen before, nor had it ever entered his mind to conceive such a matchless scene. The wide plains of Lombardy, green, glorious, golden with the richest and most inexhaustible fertility; vast oceans of grain and rice, with islands of dark-green trees that bore untold wealth of all manner of fruit; white villas, little hamlets, close-packed villages, dotted the wide expanse, with the larger forms of many a populous town. He looked to the north and to the west. The plain spread away for many a league, till the purple mountains arose as a barrier, rising up till they touched the everlasting ice. He looked to the east and south. There the plains stretched away to the horizon in illimitable extent.

"What a country! All cleared too! Every acre! And the villages! Why, there are thousands if there is one! Dear! dear! dear! How can I have the heart to blow about New England or Boston after that there! Buttons, why don't somebody tell about all this to the folks at home and stop their everlasting bragging? But"—after a long pause—"I'll do it! I'll do it!—this very night. I'll write about it to our paper!"

CHAPTER LV.

IN WHICH BUTTONS WRITES A LETTER; AND IN WHICH THE CLUB LOSES AN IMPORTANT MEMBER.—SMALL BY DEGREES AND BEAUTIFULLY LESS.

But all things, however pleasant, must have an end, so their stay in Milan soon approached its termination.

Buttons and the Senator were both quite willing to leave. The departure of the Spaniards had taken away the charm of Milan. They had already returned to Spain, and had urged Buttons very strongly to accompany them. It cost him a great struggle to decline, but he did so from certain conscientious motives, and promised to do so after going to Paris. So there was an agonizing separation, and all that. At his room Buttons unbosomed himself to his friends.

"I'll begin at the beginning," said he, directing his remarks more particularly to the Senator.

"My father is a rich man, though you may not think I live very much like a rich man's son. The fact is, he is dreadfully afraid that I will turn out a spendthrift. So he gave me only a moderate sum on which to travel on through Europe. So far I have succeeded very well. Excuse my blushes while I make the sweet confession. The Señorita whom we all admire will, some of these days, I trust, exchange the musical name of Francia for the plainer one of Buttons."

The Senator smiled with mild and paternal approbation, and shook Buttons by the hand.

"It's all arranged," continued Buttons, with sweet confusion. "Now, under the circumstances, you might think it natural that I should go back with them to Spain."

"I should certainly. Why don't you?"

"For two reasons. The first is, I have barely enough tin left to take me to Paris."

At once both the Senator and Dick offered to make unlimited advances. Buttons made a deprecatory gesture.

"I know well that I could look to you for any help in any way. But that is not the reason why I don't go to Spain. I have money enough for my wants if I don't go there."

"What is the real reason, then?"

"Well, I thought that in an affair of this kind it would be just as well to get the Governor's concurrence, and so I thought I'd drop a line to him. I've just got the letter written, and I'll put it in the mail this evening."

"You have done right, my boy," said the Senator, paternally. "There are many excellent reasons for getting your father's consent in an affair like this."

"I don't mind reading you what I have written," said Buttons, "if you care about hearing it."

"Oh, if you have no objection, we should like to hear very much," said Dick.

Whereupon Buttons, taking a letter from his pocket, read as follows:

"DEAR FATHER,—I have endeavored to follow out your instructions and be as economical as possible.

"During my tour through Italy I have made the acquaintance of the senior member of the house of Francia, in Cadiz, a gentleman with whom you are acquainted. He was travelling with his two sisters. The younger one is very amiable. As I know you would like to see me settled I have requested her hand in marriage.

"As I wish to be married before my return I thought I would let you know. Of course in allying myself to a member of so wealthy a family I will need to do it in good style. Whatever you can send me will therefore be quite acceptable.

"Please reply immediately on receipt of this, addressing me at Paris as before.

"And very much oblige E. BUTTONS."

"Well," said the Senator, "that's a sensible letter. It's to the point. I'm glad to see that you are not so foolish as most lads in your situation. Why should not a man talk as wisely about a partnership of this kind as of any other? I do declare that these rhapsodies, this high-blown, high-flown, sentimental twaddle is nauseating."

"You see, Dick," said Buttons, "I must write a letter which will have weight with the old gentleman. He likes the terse business style. I think that little hint about her fortune is well managed too. That's a great deal better than boring him with the state of my affections. Isn't it?"

"There's nothing like adapting your style to the disposition of the person you address," said Dick.

"Well, said the Senator, "you propose to start to-morrow, do you?"

"Yes," said Buttons.

"I'm agreed then. I was just beginning to get used up myself. I'm an active man, and when I've squeezed all the juice out of a place I want to throw it away and go to another. What do you say, Dick? You are silent."

"Well, to tell the truth," said Dick, "I don't care about leaving just yet. Gonfaloniere expects me to stay longer, and he would feel hurt if I hurried off. I am very sorry that you are both going. It would be capital if you could only wait here a month or so."

"A month!" cried Buttons. "I couldn't stand it another day. Will nothing induce you to come? What can we do without you?"

"What can I do without you?" said Dick, with some emotion.

"Well, Dick," said the Senator, "I'm really pained. I feel something like a sense of bereavement at the very idea. I thought, of course, we would keep together till our feet touched the sacred soil once more. But Heaven seems to have ordained it otherwise. I felt bad when Figgs and the Doctor left us at Florence, but now I feel worse by a long chalk. Can't you manage to come along nohow?"

"No," said Dick. "I really can not. I really must stay."

"What! must!"

"Yes, must!"

The Senator sighed.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE FAITHFUL ONE! — DARTS, DISTRACTION, LOVE'S VOWS, OVERPOWERING SCENE AT THE MEETING OF TWO FOND ONES. — COMPLETE BREAK-DOWN OF THE HISTORIAN.

ABOUT a month after the departure of the Senator and Buttons from Milan, Dick re-appeared upon the scene at Rome, in front of the little church which had borne so prominent a part in his fortunes; true to his love, to his hopes, to his promises, with undiminished ardor and unabated resolution. He found the Padre Liguori there, who at once took him to his room in a building adjoining the church.

"Welcome!" said he, in a tone of the deepest pleasure. "Welcome! It has been more than a passing fancy, then."

"It is the only real purpose of my life, I assure you."

"I must believe you," said Liguori, pressing his hand once more.

"And now, where is Pepita?"

"She is in Rome."

"May I see her at once?"

"How at once?"

"Well, to-day."

"No, not to-day. Her brother wishes to see you first. I must go and let them both know that you are here. But she is well and has been so."

Dick looked relieved. After some conversation Liguori told Dick to return in an hour, and he could see the Count. After waiting most impatiently Dick came back again in an hour. On entering he found Luigi. He was dressed as a gentleman this time. He was a strongly knit, well-made man of about thirty, with strikingly handsome and aristocratic features.

"Let me make my peace with you at once," said he, with the utmost courtesy. "You are a brave man, and must be generous. I have done you wrongs for which I shall never forgive myself;" and taking Dick's outstretched hand, he pressed it heartily.

"Say nothing about it, I beg," said Dick; "you were justified in what you did, though you may have been a little hasty."

"Had I not been blinded by passion I would have been incapable of such a piece of cowardice. But I have had much to endure, and I was always afraid about her."

With the utmost frankness the two men received each other's explanations, and the greatest cordiality arose at once. Dick insisted on Luigi's taking dinner with him, and Luigi, laughingly declaring that it would be a sign of peace to eat bread and salt together, went with Dick to his hotel.

As they entered Dick's apartments Gonfaloniere was lounging near the window. He had accompanied Dick to Rome. He started at the sight of Luigi.

"God in Heaven!" he cried, bounding to his feet.

"Ugo!" exclaimed the other.

"Luigi!"

And the two men, in true Italian fashion, sprang into one another's arms.

"And is my best friend, and oldest friend, the brother of your betrothed?" asked Gonfaloniere of Dick.

But Dick only nodded. He was quite mystified by all this. An explanation, however, was soon made. The two had been educated together, and had fought side by side in the great movements of '48, under Garibaldi, and in Lombardy.

For full an hour these two friends asked one another a torrent of questions. Luigi asked Gonfaloniere about his exile in America; whereupon the other described that exile in glowing terms—how he landed in Boston, how Dick, then little more than a lad, became acquainted with him, and how true a friend he had been in his misery. The animated words of Gonfaloniere produced a striking effect. Luigi swore eternal friendship with Dick, and finally declared that he must come and see Pepita that very day.

So, leaving Gonfaloniere with the promise of seeing him again, Luigi walked with Dick out to the place where he lived. The reason why he had not wanted him to see Pepita that day was because he was ashamed of their lodgings. But that had passed, and as he understood Dick better he saw there was no reason for such shame. It was a house within a few rods of the church.

Dick's heart throbbed violently as he entered the door after Luigi and ascended the steps inside the court-yard. Luigi pointed to a door and drew back.

THE DOOR.

Dick knocked.

The door opened.

"Pepita!"

To describe such a meeting is simply out of the question.

"I knew you would come," said she, after about one solid hour, in which not a single intelligible word was uttered.

"And for you! Oh, Pepita!"

"You do not think now that I was cruel?" and a warm flush overspread the lovely face of the young girl.

"Cruel!" (and Dick makes her see that he positively does not think so).

"I could not do otherwise."

"I love you too well to doubt it."

"My brother hated you so. It would have

been impossible. And I could not wound his feelings."

"He's a splendid fellow, and you were right."

"Padre Liguori showed him what you were, and I tried to explain a little," added Pepita, shyly.

"Heaven bless Padre Liguori! As for you —you—"

"Don't."

"Well, your brother understands me at last. He knows that I love you so well that I would die for you."

Tears came into Pepita's eyes as the sudden recollection arose of Dick's misadventure on the road.

"Do you remember," asked Dick, softly, after about three hours and twenty minutes—"do you remember how I once wished that I was walking with you on a road that would go on forever?"

"Yes."

"Well, we're on that track now."

[The Historian of these adventures feels most keenly his utter inadequacy to the requirements of this scene. Need he say that the above description is a complete *fiasco*? Reader, your imagination, if you please.]

CHAPTER LVII.

THE DODGE CLUB IN PARIS ONCE MORE.—BUTTONS'S "JOLLY GOOD HEALTH."

Not very long after the events alluded to in the last chapter a brilliant dinner was given in Paris at the "Hotel de Lille et d'Albion." On the arrival of the Senator and Buttons at Paris they had found Mr. Figgs and the Doctor without any trouble. The meeting was a rapturous one. The Dodge Club was again an entity, although an important member was not there. On this occasion the one who gave the dinner was Buttons!

All the delicacies of the season. In fact, a banquet. Mr. Figgs shone resplendently. If a factory was the sphere of the Senator, a supper-table was the place for Mr. Figgs. The others felt that they had never before known fully all the depth of feeling, of fancy, and of sentiment that lurked under that placid, smooth, and rosy exterior. The Doctor was epigrammatic; the Senator sententious; Buttons uproarious.

Dick's health was drunk in bumpers with all the honors:

"For he's a jolly good fe-e-e-e-e-llow!
For he's a jolly good *fe-e-e-e-e-llow!!*
For he's a jolly good FE-E-E-E-E-LLOW!!!
Which nobody can deny!"

All this time Buttons was more joyous, more radiant, and altogether more extravagant than usual. The others asked themselves, "Why?" In the course of the evening it became known. Taking advantage of a short pause in the conversation he communicated the startling fact that he had that day received a letter from his father.

"Shall I read it?"

"AYE!!!" unanimously, in tones of thunder.

"HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW!"

Buttons opened it and read:

"Dear Son,—Your esteemed favor, 15th ult., I have rec'd.

"I beg leave hereby to express my concurrence with your design.

"My connection with the house of Francis has been of the most satisfactory kind. I have no doubt that yours will be equally so.

"I inclose you draft on Mess. Dupont Gerand, et Cie of Paris, for $50.00—say five thousand dollars—rec'd of which please acknowledge. If this sum is insufficient you are at liberty to draw for what may be required.

"I remain, Hiram Buttons."

Thunders of applause arose as Buttons folded the letter.

A speech from the Senator proposed the health of Buttons Senior.

Another from the Doctor.

Another from Mr. Figgs.

Acknowledgment by Buttons.

Announcement by Buttons of immediate departure for Cadiz.

Wild cheers. Buttons's jolly good health!

"For he's a jolly good fe-e-e-e-e-llow!
For he's a jolly good *fe-e-e-e-e-llow!!*
For he's a jolly good FE-E-E-E-E-LLOW!!!
Which nobody can deny!"

THE END.

"AND AS THEY STOOD THE CLERGYMEN SLOWLY CAME OUT OF THE HOUSE."—[SEE PAGE 132.]

E PAGE 132.]

THE AMERICAN BARON.

A Novel.

By JAMES DE MILLE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE DODGE CLUB," "THE CRYPTOGRAM," "CORD AND CREESE," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1872.

By Prof. JAMES DE MILLE.

THE DODGE CLUB; or, Italy in 1859. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, 75 cents; Cloth, $1 25.

CORD AND CREESE. A Novel. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, 75 cents; Cloth, $1 25.

THE CRYPTOGRAM. A Novel. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper, $1 50; Cloth, $2 00.

THE AMERICAN BARON. A Novel. Illustrated. 8vo, Paper.

Published by HARPER & BROTHERS, New York.

☞ *Sent by mail, postage prepaid, to any part of the United States, on receipt of the price.*

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871, by
HARPER & BROTHERS,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

THE AMERICAN BARON.

"PARDON, MEES."

CHAPTER I.

THE AVALANCHE.

SOMEWHAT less than a hundred years ago a party of travelers might have been seen crossing over the Simplon Road, *en route* for Italy. They had been detained at Brieg by reports that the road was impassable; and, as it was the month of March, the prospect of snow and storms and avalanches was sufficient to make them hesitate. At length the road had been reopened, and they were informed that the journey might be made on sleds.

Unwilling to wait at Brieg, and equally unwilling to make a detour so as to take the railroad, the party decided to go on. They were informed that they could go on wheels as far as the line of snow, but that afterward their accommodations would not be so comfortable as they might desire. The road had been cleared for only a few feet; the snow was deep; the sleds were rude; and progress would be slow. These statements, however, did not shake the resolution of the party; and the end of it was that they determined to go on, and cross the mountain if it were possible.

On leaving Brieg the road began to ascend with a very slight incline, winding around in an intricate sort of way, sometimes crossing deep gullies, at other times piercing the hillside in long dark tunnels; but amidst all these windings ever ascending, so that every step took them higher and higher above the little valley where Brieg lay. The party saw also that every step brought them steadily nearer to the line of snow; and at length they found the road covered with a thin white layer. Over this they rolled, and though the snow became deeper with every furlong of their progress, yet they encountered but little actual difficulty until they approached the first station where the horses were to be changed. Here they came to a deep drift. Through this a pathway had been cleared, so that there was no difficulty about going through; but the sight of this served to show them what might be expected further on, and to fill them all with grave doubts as to the practicability of a journey which was thus interrupted so early.

On reaching the station these doubts were confirmed. They were informed that the road had been cleared for sleds on the preceding day, but that on the previous night fresh snow had fallen, and in such quantities that the road would have to be cleared afresh. The worst of it was that there was every probability of new snow-storms, which would cover the road still deeper, and once more obliterate the track. This led to a fresh debate about the journey; but they were all unwilling to turn back. Only a few miles separated them from Domo d'Ossola, and they were assured that, if no fresh snow should fall, they would be able to start on the following morning. This last assurance once more confirmed their wavering resolution, and they concluded to wait at the station.

For the remainder of that day they waited at the little way-side inn, amusing themselves with looking out upon their surroundings. They were environed by a scene of universal white. Above them towered vast Alpine summits, where the wild wind blew, sweeping the snow-wreaths into the air. In front was a deep ra-

vine, at the bottom of which there ran a torrent that foamed and tossed over rocks and boulders. It was not possible to take a walk to any distance. Their boots were made for lighter purposes than plunging through snow-drifts; and so they were forced to remain indoors, and pass the time as best they could.

On the following morning they found every thing in readiness for a start. In front of the inn they saw five sleds of that kind which is universally used in the northern part of America. Each sled was of the rudest possible construction, and was drawn by one horse; straw was spread over the sled, upon which fur-robes and blankets were flung. The party was distributed among these sleds, so that each one should have as light a load as possible, while one of the rude vehicles carried the luggage.

Thus arranged, they all started off. And now, since they are all fairly under way, I propose to introduce them, individually and collectively, to my very good friend the reader.

First of all I must mention the fact that the party consisted chiefly of ladies and their attendants.

Of these the most prominent was a slim, tall, elderly lady, with large, dark, soft eyes, that spoke of a vanished youth and beauty from her heavily wrinkled face. She was the Dowager Lady Dalrymple, and acted toward the rest of the party in the multifarious capacity of chaperon, general, courier, guide, philosopher, friend, and Mentor.

Next came Mrs. Willoughby, a widow of great beauty and fascination, a brunette, good-natured, clever, and shrewd. I might here pause, and go into no end of raptures on the various qualities of this lady's character; but, on the whole, I think I'd better not, as they will be sufficiently apparent before the end of this story is reached.

Then there was Miss Minnie Fay, sister to Mrs. Willoughby, and utterly unlike her in every respect. Minnie was a blonde, with blue eyes, golden hair cut short and clustering about her little head, little bit of a mouth, with very red, plump lips, and very white teeth. Minnie was very small, and very elegant in shape, in gesture, in dress, in every attitude and every movement. The most striking thing about her, however, was the expression of her eyes and her face. There was about her brow the glory of perfect innocence. Her eyes had a glance of unfathomable melancholy, mingled with childlike trust in the particular person upon whom her gaze was fastened. Minnie was considered by all her friends as a child—was treated as a child—humored, petted, coaxed, indulged, and talked to as a child. Minnie, on her part, thought, spoke, lived, moved, and acted as a child. She fretted, she teased, she pouted, she cried, she did every thing as a child does; and thus carried up to the age of eighteen the bloom and charm of eight.

The two sisters were nieces of the Dowager Lady Dalrymple. Another niece also accompanied them, who was a cousin of the two sisters. This was Miss Ethel Orne, a young lady who had flourished through a London season, and had refused any number of brilliant offers. She was a brunette, with most wonderful dark eyes, figure of perfect grace, and an expression of grave self-poise that awed the butterflies of fashion, but offered an irresistible attraction to people of sense, intellect, intelligence, esprit, and all that sort of thing—like you and me, my boy.

I am taking up too much time and anticipating somewhat, I fear, by these descriptions; so let us drop Miss Ethel.

These ladies being thus all related formed a family party, and had made the journey thus far on the best of terms, without any other escort than that which was afforded by their chaperon, general, courier, guide, philosopher, friend, and Mentor—the Dowager Lady Dalrymple.

The party was enlarged by the presence of four maids and a foreign gentleman. This last-mentioned personage was small in stature, with a very handsome face and very brilliant eyes. His frame, though slight, was sinewy and well-knit, and he looked like an Italian. He had come on alone, and had passed the night at the station-house.

A track about six feet wide had been cut out through the snow, and over this they passed. The snow was soft, and the horses sank deep, so that progress was slow. Nor was the journey without the excitement of apparent danger. At times before them and behind them there would come a low, rumbling sound, and they would see a mass of snow and ice rushing down some neighboring slope. Some of these fell on the road, and more than once they had to quit their sleds and wait for the drivers to get them over the heaps that had been formed across their path. Fortunately, however, none of these came near them; and Minnie Fay, who at first had screamed at intervals of about five minutes, gradually gained confidence, and at length changed her mood so completely that she laughed and clapped her little hands whenever she saw the rush of snow and ice. Thus slowly, yet in safety, they pushed onward, and at length reached the little village of Simplon. Here they waited an hour to warm themselves, lunch, and change horses. At the end of that time they set out afresh, and once more they were on their winding way.

They had now the gratification of finding that they were descending the slope, and of knowing that this descent took them every minute further from the regions of snow, and nearer to the sunny plains of Italy. Minnie in particular gave utterance to her delight; and now, having lost every particle of fear, she begged to be allowed to drive in the foremost sled. Ethel had been in it thus far, but she willingly changed places with Minnie, and thus the descent was made.

The sleds and their occupants were now arranged in the following order:

First, Minnie Fay alone with the driver.

Second, Mrs. Willoughby and Ethel.

Third, the Dowager and her maid.

Fourth, the three other maids.

Fifth, the luggage.

After these five sleds, containing our party, came another with the foreign gentleman.

Each of these sleds had a driver to itself.

In this order the party went, until at length they came to the Gorge of Gondo. This is a narrow valley, the sides of which rise up very abruptly, and in some places precipitously, to a great height. At the bottom flows a furious torrent, which boils and foams and roars as it forces its impetuous way onward over fallen masses of rock and trees and boulders, at one time gathering into still pools, at other times roaring into cataracts. Their road had been cut out on the side of the mountain, and the path had been cleared away here many feet above the buried road; and as they wound along the slope they could look up at the stupendous heights above them, and down at the abyss beneath them, whose white snow-covering was marked at the bottom by the black line of the roaring torrent. The smooth slope of snow ran down as far as the eye could reach at a steep angle, filling up all crevices, with here and there a projecting rock or a dark clump of trees to break its surface.

The road was far beneath them. The drivers had informed them that it was forty feet deep at the top of the pass, and that its depth here was over thirty. Long poles which were inserted in the snow projected above its surface, and served to mark where the road ran.

Here, then, they drove along, feeling wearied with the length of the way, impatient at the slowness of their progress, and eager to reach their journey's end. But little was said. All had talked till all were tired out. Even Minnie Fay, who at first had evinced great enthusiasm on finding herself leading the way, and had kept turning back constantly to address remarks to her friends, had at length subsided, and had rolled herself up more closely in her furs, and heaped the straw higher about her little feet.

Suddenly, before them, and above them, and behind them, and all around them, there arose a deep, low, dull, rushing sound, which seemed as if all the snow on the slope was moving. Their ears had by this time become sufficiently well acquainted with the peculiar sound of the rushing snow-masses to know that this was the noise that heralded their progress, and to feel sure that this was an avalanche of no common size. Yes, this was an avalanche, and every one heard it; but no one could tell where it was moving, or whether it was near or far, or whether it was before or behind. They only knew that it was somewhere along the slope which they were traversing.

A warning cry came from the foremost driver. He looked back, and his face was as pale as death. He waved his hands above him, and then shouting for the others to follow, he whipped up his horse furiously. The animal plunged into the snow, and tossed and floundered and made a rush onward.

But the other drivers held back, and, instead of following, shouted to the first driver to stop, and cried to the passengers to hold on. Not a cry of fear escaped from any one of the ladies. All did as they were directed, and grasped the stakes of their sleds, looking up at the slope with white lips, and expectation of horror in their eyes, watching for the avalanche.

And down it came, a vast mass of snow and ice—down it came, irresistibly, tremendously, with a force that nothing could withstand. All eyes watched its progress in the silence of utter and helpless terror. It came. It struck. All the sleds in the rear escaped, but Minnie's sled lay in the course of the falling mass. The driver had madly rushed into the very midst of the danger which he sought to avoid. A scream from Minnie and a cry of despair from the driver burst upon the ears of the horrified listeners, and the sled that bore them, buried in the snow, went over the edge of the slope, and downward to the abyss.

CHAPTER II.

THE PERILOUS DESCENT.

The shriek of Minnie and the driver's cry of despair were both stopped abruptly by the rush of snow, and were smothered in the heap under which they were buried. The whole party stood paralyzed, gazing stupidly downward where the avalanche was hurrying on to the abyss, bearing with it the ill-fated Minnie. The descent was a slope of smooth snow, which went down at an angle of forty-five degrees for at least a thousand feet. At that point there seemed to be a precipice. As their aching eyes watched the falling mass they saw it approach this place, and then as it came near the whole avalanche seemed to divide as though it had been severed by some projecting rock. It divided thus, and went to ruin; while in the midst of the ruin they saw the sled, looking like a helpless boat in the midst of foaming breakers. So, like such a helpless boat, it was dashed forward, and shot out of sight over the precipice.

Whither had it gone? Into what abyss had it fallen? What lay beneath that point over which it had been thrown? Was it the fierce torrent that rolled there, or were there black rocks and sharp crags lying at the foot of the awful precipice? Such were the questions which flashed through every mind, and deepened the universal horror into universal despair.

In the midst of this general dismay Ethel was the first to speak and to act. She started

to her feet, and looking back, called in a loud voice:

"Go down after her! A thousand pounds to the man who saves her! Quick!"

At this the drivers came forward. None of them could understand English, and so had not comprehended her offer; but they saw by her gestures what she wanted. They, however, did not seem inclined to act. They pointed down, and pointed up, and shook their heads, and jabbered some strange, unintelligible patois.

"Cowards!" cried Ethel, "to leave a young girl to die. I will go down myself."

And then, just as she was, she stepped from the sled, and paused for a moment, looking down the slope as though selecting a place. Lady Dalrymple and Mrs. Willoughby screamed to her to come back, and the drivers surrounded her with wild gesticulations. To all this she paid no attention whatever, and would certainly have gone down in another moment had not a hand been laid on her arm, and a voice close by her said, with a strong foreign accent,

"Mees!"

She turned at once.

It was the foreign gentleman who had been driving behind the party. He had come up and had just reached the place. He now stood before her with his hat in one hand and the other hand on his heart.

"Pardon, mees," he said, with a bow. "Eet is too periloss. I sall go down eef you 'low me to mak ze attemp."

"Oh, monsieur," cried Ethel, "save her if you can!"

"Do not fear. Be calm. I sall go down. Nevare mine."

The stranger now turned to the drivers, and spoke to them in their own language. They all obeyed at once. He was giving them explicit directions in a way that showed a perfect command of the situation. It now appeared that each sled had a coil of rope, which was evidently supplied from an apprehension of some such accident as this. Hastily yet dextrously the foreign gentleman took one of these coils, and then binding a blanket around his waist, he passed the rope around this, so that it would press against the blanket without cutting him. Having secured this tightly, he gave some further directions to the drivers, and then prepared to go down.

Hitherto the drivers had acted in sullen submission rather than with ready acquiescence. They were evidently afraid of another avalanche; and the frequent glances which they threw at the slope above them plainly showed that they expected this snow to follow the example of the other. In spite of themselves an expression of this fear escaped them, and came to the ears of the foreign gentleman. He turned at once on the brink of the descent, and burst into a torrent of invective against them. The ladies could not understand him, but they could perceive that he was uttering threats, and that the men quailed before him. He did not waste any time, however. After reducing the men to a state of sulky submission, he turned once more and began the descent.

As he went down the rope was held by the men, who allowed it to pass through their hands so as to steady his descent. The task before the adventurer was one of no common difficulty. The snow was soft, and at every step he sank in at least to his knees. Frequently he came to treacherous places, where he sank down above his waist, and was only able to scramble out with difficulty. But the rope sustained him; and as his progress was downward, he succeeded in moving with some rapidity toward his destination. The ladies on the height above sat in perfect silence, watching the progress of the man who was thus descending with his life in his hand to seek and to save their lost companion, and in the intensity of their anxiety forgot utterly about any danger to themselves, though from time to time there arose the well-known sound of sliding masses, not so far away but that under other circumstances of less anxiety it might have filled them with alarm. But now there was no alarm for themselves.

And now the stranger was far down, and the coil of rope was well-nigh exhausted. But this had been prepared for, and the drivers fastened this rope to another coil, and after a time began to let out that one also.

Farther and farther down the descent went on. They saw the stranger pursuing his way still with unfaltering resolution; and they sent after him all their hearts and all their prayers. At last he plunged down almost out of sight, but the next moment he emerged, and then, after a few leaps, they saw that he had gained the place where lay the ruins of the shattered avalanche. Over this he walked, sometimes sinking, at other times running and leaping, until at length he came to the precipice over which the sled had been flung.

And now the suspense of the ladies became terrible. This was the critical moment. Already his eyes could look down upon the mystery that lay beneath that precipice. And what lay revealed there? Did his eyes encounter a spectacle of horror? Did they gaze down into the inaccessible depths of some hideous abyss? Did they see those jagged rocks, those sharp crags, those giant boulders, those roaring billows, which, in their imaginations, had drawn down their lost companion to destruction? Such conjectures were too terrible. Their breath failed them, and their hearts for a time almost ceased to beat as they sat there, overcome by such dread thoughts as these.

Suddenly a cry of delight escaped Ethel. She was kneeling down beside Lady Dalrymple and Mrs. Willoughby, with her eyes staring from her pallid face, when she saw the stranger turn and look up. He took off his hat, and waved it two or three times. Then he beckoned to the drivers. Then he sat down

and prepared to let himself over the precipice. This incident inspired hope. It did more. It gave a moment's confidence, and the certainty that all was not lost. They looked at each other, and wept tears of joy. But soon that momentary hope vanished, and uncertainty returned. After all, what did the stranger's gesture mean? He might have seen her—but how? He might reach her, but would she be safe from harm? Could such a thing be hoped for? Would she not, rather, be all marred and mutilated? Dared they hope for any thing better? They dared not. And now they sat once more, as sad as before, and their short-lived gleam of hope faded away.

They saw the stranger go over the precipice.

Then he disappeared.

The rope was let out for a little distance, and then stopped. Then more went out. Then it stopped again.

The rope now lay quite loose. There was no tension.

What was the meaning of this? Was he clinging to the side of the precipice? Impossible. It looked rather as though he had reached some place where he was free to move, and had no further need of descent. And it seemed as though the precipice might not be so deep or so fearful as they had supposed.

In a short time their eyes were greeted by the appearance of the stranger above the precipice. He waved his hat again. Then he made some gestures, and detached the rope from his person. The drivers understood him as if this had been preconcerted. Two of them instantly unharnessed the horse from one of the sleds, while the others pulled up the rope which the stranger had cast off. Then the latter disappeared once more behind the precipice. The ladies watched now in deep suspense; inclining to hope, yet dreading the worst. They saw the drivers fasten the rope to the sled, and let it down the slope. It was light, and the runners were wide. It did not sink much, but slid down quite rapidly. Once or twice it stuck, but by jerking it back it was detached, and went on as before. At last it reached the precipice at a point not more than a hundred feet from where the stranger had last appeared.

And now as they sat there, reduced once more to the uttermost extremity of suspense, they saw a sight which sent a thrill of rapture through their aching hearts. They saw the stranger come slowly above the precipice, and then stop, and stoop, and look back. Then they saw—oh, Heavens! who was that? Was not that her red hood—and that figure who thus slowly emerged from behind the edge of the precipice which had so long concealed her—that figure! Was it possible? Not dead—not mangled, but living, moving, and, yes—wonder of wonders—scaling a precipice! Could it be! Oh joy! Oh bliss! Oh revulsion from despair! The ladies trembled and shivered, and laughed and sobbed convulsively, and wept in one another's arms by turns.

As far as they could see through the tears that dimmed their eyes, Minnie could not be much injured. She moved quite lightly over the snow, as the stranger led her toward the sled; only sinking once or twice, and then extricating herself even more readily than her companion. At last she reached the sled, and the stranger, taking off the blanket that he had worn under the rope, threw it over her shoulders.

Then he signaled to the men above, and they began to pull up the sled. The stranger climbed up after it through the deep snow, walking behind it for some distance. At last he made a despairing gesture to the men, and sank down.

The men looked bewildered, and stopped pulling.

The stranger started up, and waved his hands impatiently, pointing to Minnie.

The drivers began to pull once more at the sled, and the stranger once more sank exhausted in the snow.

At this Ethel started up.

"That noble soul!" she cried; "that generous heart! See! he is saving Minnie, and sitting down to die in the snow!"

She sprang toward the men, and endeavored to make them do something. By her gestures she tried to get two of the men to pull at the sled, and the third man to let the fourth man down with a rope to the stranger. The men refused; but at the offer of her purse, which was well filled with gold, they consented. Two of them then pulled at the sled, and number four bound the rope about him, and went down, while number three held the rope. He went down without difficulty, and reached the stranger. By this time Minnie had been drawn to the top, and was clasped in the arms of her friends.

But now the strength and the sense which had been so wonderfully maintained gave way utterly; and no sooner did she find herself safe than she fell down unconscious.

They drew her to a sled, and tenderly laid her on the straw, and lovingly and gently they tried to restore her, and call her back to consciousness. But for a long time their efforts were of no avail.

She lay there a picture of perfect loveliness, as beautiful as a dream—like some child-angel. Her hair, frosted with snow dust, clustered in golden curls over her fair white brow; her little hands were folded meekly over her breast; her sweet lips were parted, and disclosed the pearly teeth; the gentle eyes no longer looked forth with their piteous expression of mute appeal; and her hearing was deaf to the words of love and pity that were lavished upon her.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHILD-ANGEL AND HER WOES.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY was in her room at the hotel in Milan, when the door opened, and Minnie came in. She looked around the room, drew a long breath, then locked the door, and flinging herself upon a sofa, she reclined there in silence for some time, looking hard at the ceiling. Mrs. Willoughby looked a little surprised at first; but after waiting a few moments for Minnie to say something, resumed her reading, which had been interrupted.

"Kitty," said Minnie at last.

"What?" said her sister, looking up.

"I think you're horrid."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Why, because when you see and know that I'm dying to speak to you, you go on reading that wretched book."

"Why, Minnie darling," said Mrs. Willoughby, "how in the world was I to know that you wanted to speak to me?"

"You *might* have known," said Minnie, with a pout—"you saw me look all round, and lock the door; and you saw how worried I looked, and I think it a shame, and I've a great mind not to tell you any thing about it."

"About it—what *it*?" and Mrs. Willoughby put down her book, and regarded her sister with some curiosity.

"I've a great mind not to tell you, but I can't help it. Besides, I'm dying to ask your advice. I don't know what to do; and I wish I was dead—there!"

"My poor Minnie! what *is* the matter? You're *so* incoherent."

"Well, Kitty, it's all my accident."

"Your accident!"

"Yes; on the Alps, you know."

"What! You haven't received any serious injury, have you?" asked Mrs. Willoughby, with some alarm.

"Oh! I don't mean that; but I'll tell you what I mean;" and here Minnie got up from her reclining position, and allowed her little feet to touch the carpet, while she fastened her great, fond, pleading, piteous eyes upon her sister.

"It's the Count, you know," said she.

"The Count!" repeated Mrs. Willoughby, somewhat dryly. "Well?"

"Well—don't you know what I mean? Oh, how stupid you are!"

"I really can not imagine."

"Well—he—he—he pro—proposed, you know."

"Proposed!" cried the other, in a voice of dismay.

"Now, Kitty, if you speak in that horrid way I won't say another word. I'm worried too much already, and I don't want you to scold me. And I won't have it."

"Minnie darling, I wish you would tell me something. I'm not scolding. I merely wish to know what you mean. Do you really mean that the Count has proposed to you?"

"Of course that's what I mean."

"What puzzles me is, how he could have got the chance. It's more than a week since he saved you, and we all felt deeply grateful to him. But saving a girl's life doesn't give a man any claim over her; and we don't altogether like him; and so we all have tried, in a quiet way, without hurting his feelings, you know, to prevent him from having any acquaintance with you."

"Oh, I know, I know," said Minnie, briskly. "He told me all that. He understands that; but he doesn't care, he says, if *I* only consent. He will forgive *you*, he says."

Minnie's volubility was suddenly checked by catching her sister's eye fixed on her in new amazement.

"Now you're beginning to be horrid," she cried. "Don't, don't—"

"Will you have the kindness to tell me," said Mrs. Willoughby, very quietly, "how in the world the Count contrived to tell you all this?"

"Why—why—several times."

"Several times!"

"Yes."

"Tell me where?"

"Why, once at the amphitheatre. You were walking ahead, and I sat down to rest, and he came and joined me. He left before you came back."

"He must have been following us, then."

"Yes. And another time in the picture-gallery; and yesterday in a shop; and this morning at the Cathedral."

"The Cathedral!"

"Yes, Kitty. You know we all went, and Lady Dalrymple would not go up. So Ethel and I went up. And when we got up to the top I walked about, and Ethel sat down to admire the view. And, you know, I found myself off at a little distance, when suddenly I saw Count Girasole. And then, you know, he—he—proposed."

Mrs. Willoughby sat silent for some time.

"And what did you say to him?" she asked at length.

"Why, what else could I say?"

"What else than *what*?"

"I don't see why you should act *so* like a grand inquisitor, Kitty. You really make me feel quite nervous," said Minnie, who put her little rosy-tipped fingers to one of her eyes, and attempted a sob, which turned out a failure.

"Oh, I only asked you what you told him, you know."

"Well," said Minnie, gravely, "I told him, you know, that I was awfully grateful to him, and that I'd give any thing if I could to express my gratitude. And then, you know—oh, he speaks such darling broken English—he called me his 'mees,' and tried to make a pretty speech, which was so mixed with Italian that I didn't understand one single word. By-the-way, Kitty, isn't it odd how every body here speaks Italian, even the children?"

"Yes, very odd; but, Minnie dear, I want to know what you told him."

"Why, I told him that I didn't know, you know."

"And then?"

"And then he took my hand. Now, Kitty, you're unkind. I really *can not* tell you all this."

"Yes, but I only ask so as to advise you. I want to know how the case stands."

"Well, you know, he was so urgent—"

"Yes?"

"And so handsome—"

"Well?"

"And then, you know, he saved my life—didn't he, now? You must acknowledge that much, mustn't you?"

"Oh yes."

"Well—"

"Well?"

Minnie sighed.

"So what could I say?"

Minnie paused.

Mrs. Willoughby looked troubled.

"Kitty, I *wish* you wouldn't look at me with that dreadful expression. You really make me feel quite frightened."

"Minnie," said the other, in a serious voice, "do you really *love* this man?"

"Love this man! why no, not particularly; but I *like* him; that is, I think I do, or rather I thought I did; but really I'm so worried about all my troubles that I wish he had never come down after me. I don't see why he did, either. I didn't ask him to. I remember, now, I really felt quite embarrassed when I saw him. I knew there would be trouble about it. And I wish you would take me back home. I hate Italy. Do, Kitty darling. But then—"

Minnie paused again.

"Well, Minnie dear, we certainly must contrive some plan to shake him off without hurting his feelings. It can't be thought of. There are a hundred objections. If the worst comes to the worst we can go back, as you say, to England."

"I know; but then," said Minnie, "that's the very thing that I can't do—"

"Can't do what?"

"Go back to England."

"Back to England! Why not? I don't know what you mean."

"Well, you see, Kitty, that's the very thing I came to see you about. This dreadful man—the Count, you know—has some wonderful way of finding out where I go; and he keeps all the time appearing and disappearing in the very strangest manner; and when I saw him on the roof of the Cathedral it really made me feel quite giddy. He is *so* determined to win me that I'm afraid to look round. He takes the commonest civility as encouragement. And then, you know—there it is—I really can't go back to England."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why there's—a—a dreadful person there," said Minnie, with an awful look in her eyes.

"A what?"

"A—person," said Minnie.

"A man?"

Minnie nodded. "Oh yes—of course. Really when one thinks of one's troubles it's enough to drive one distracted. This person is a man. I don't know why it is that I should be *so* worried and *so* distracted by men. I do *not* like them, and I wish there were no such persons."

"Another man!" said Mrs. Willoughby, in some surprise. "Well, Minnie, you certainly—"

"Now don't, don't—not a word; I know all you're going to say, and I won't stand it;" and Minnie ran over to her sister and held her hand over her mouth.

"I won't say a word," said Mrs. Willoughby, as soon as she had removed Minnie's hand; "so begin."

Minnie resumed her place on the sofa, and gave a long sigh.

"Well, you know, Kitty darling, it happened at Brighton last September. You were in Scotland then. I was with old Lady Shrewsbury, who is as blind as a bat—and where's the use of having a person to look after you when they're blind! You see, my horse ran away, and I think he must have gone ever so many miles, over railroad bridges and hedges and stone walls. I'm certain he jumped over a small cottage. Well, you know, when all seemed lost, suddenly there was a strong hand laid on the reins, and my horse was stopped. I tumbled into some strange gentleman's arms, and was carried into a house, where I was resuscitated. I returned home in the gentleman's carriage.

"Now the worst of it is," said Minnie, with a piteous look, "that the person who stopped the horse called to inquire after me the next day. Lady Shrewsbury, like an old goose, was awfully civil to him; and so there I was! His name is Captain Kirby, and I wish there were no captains in the world. The life he led me! He used to call, and I had to go out riding with him, and old Lady Shrewsbury utterly neglected me; and so, you know, Kitty darling, he at last, you know, of course, proposed. That's what they all do, you know, when they save your life. Always! It's awful!"

Minnie heaved a sigh, and sat apparently meditating on the enormous baseness of the man who saved a lady's life and then proposed; and it was not until Mrs. Willoughby had spoken twice that she was recalled to herself.

"What did you tell him?" was her sister's question.

"Why, what could I tell him?"

"What!" cried Mrs. Willoughby; "you don't—"

"Now, Kitty, I think it's very unkind in you, when I want all your sympathy, to be *so* horrid."

"Well, tell it your own way, Minnie dearest."

Minnie sat for a time regarding vacancy with a soft, sad, and piteous expression in her large blue eyes; with her head also a little on one

"ANOTHER MAN!"

side, and her delicate hands gently clasped in front of her.

"You see, Kitty darling, he took me out riding, and—he took me to the place where I had met him, and then he proposed. Well, you know, I didn't know what to say. He was *so* earnest, and *so* despairing. And then, you know, Kitty dearest, he had saved my life, and so—"

"And so?"

"Well, I told him I didn't know, and was shockingly confused, and then we got up quite a scene. He swore that he would go to Mexico, though why I can't imagine; and I really wish he had; but I was frightened at the time, and I cried; and then he got worse, and I told him not to; whereupon he went into raptures, and began to call me no end of names—spooney names, you know; and I—oh, I did *so* want him to stop!—I think I must have promised him all that he wanted; and when I got home I was frightened out of my poor little wits, and cried all night."

"Poor dear child!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, with tender sympathy. "What a wretch!"

"No, he wasn't a wretch at all; he was awfully handsome, only, you know, he—was—so—*awfully* persevering, and kept *so* at my heels; but I hurried home from Brighton, and thought I had got rid of him."

"And hadn't you?"

"Oh dear, no," said Minnie, mournfully. "On the day after my arrival there came a letter; and, you know, I had to answer it; and then another; and so it went on—"

"Oh, Minnie! why didn't you tell me before?"

"How could I when you were off in that horrid Scotland? I *always* hated Scotland."

"You might have told papa."

"I couldn't. I think papa's cruel *too*. He doesn't care for me at all. Why didn't he find out our correspondence and intercept it, the way papas always do in novels? If I were *his* papa I'd not let *him* be so worried."

"And did he never call on you?"

"Yes; he got leave of absence once, and I had a dreadful time with him. He was in a desperate state of mind. He was ordered off to Gibraltar. But I managed to comfort him; and, oh dear, Kitty dear, did you *ever* try to comfort a man, and the man a total stranger?"

At this innocent question Mrs. Willoughby's gravity gave way a little.

Minnie frowned, and then sighed.

"Well, you needn't be so unkind," said she; and then her little hand tried to wipe away a tear, but failed.

"Did he go to Gibraltar?" asked Mrs. Willoughby at length.

"Yes, he did," said Minnie, with a little asperity.

"Did he write?"

"Of course he wrote," in the same tone.

"Well, how did it end?"

"End! It didn't end at all. And it never will end. It'll go on getting worse and worse every day. You see he wrote, and said a lot of rubbish about his getting leave of absence and coming to see me. And then I determined to

run away; and you know I begged you to take me to Italy, and this is the first time I've told you the real reason."

"So that was the real reason?"

"Yes."

"Well, Minnie, my poor child," said Mrs. Willoughby, after a pause, "you're safe from your officer, at any rate; and as to Count Girasole, we must save you from him. Don't give way."

"But you can't save me. They'll come after me, I know. Captain Kirby, the moment he finds out that I am here, will come flying after me; and then, oh dear! the other one will come, and the American, too, of course."

"The what? who?" cried Mrs. Willoughby, starting up with new excitement. "Who's that? What did you say, Minnie? The American? What American?"

Minnie threw a look of reproach at her sister, and her eyes fell.

"You can't possibly mean that there are any more—"

"There—is—*one*—more," said Minnie, in a low, faint voice, stealing a glance at her sister, and looking a little frightened.

"One more!" repeated her sister, breathless.

"Well, I didn't come here to be scolded," said Minnie, rising, "and I'll go. But I hoped that you'd help me; and I think you're very unkind; and I wouldn't treat you so."

"No, no, Minnie," said Mrs. Willoughby, rising, and putting her arm round her sister, and drawing her back. "I had no idea of scolding. I never scolded any one in my life, and wouldn't speak a cross word to you for the world. Sit down now, Minnie darling, and tell me all. What about the American? I won't express any more astonishment, no matter what I may feel."

"But you mustn't *feel* any astonishment," insisted Minnie.

"Well, darling, I won't," said her sister.

Minnie gave a sigh.

"It was last year, you know, in the spring. Papa and I were going out to Montreal, to bring you home. You remember?"

Mrs. Willoughby nodded, while a sad expression came over her face.

"And, you remember, the steamer was wrecked."

"Yes."

"But I never told you how my life was saved."

"Why, yes, you did. Didn't papa tell all about the heroic sailor who swam ashore with you? how he was frantic about you, having been swept away by a wave from you? and how he fainted away with joy when you were brought to him? How can you suppose I would forget that? And then how papa tried to find the noble sailor to reward him."

"Oh yes," said Minnie, in a despondent tone. "That's all very true; but he wasn't a noble sailor at all."

"What!"

"You see, he wasn't going to have a scene with papa, and so he kept out of his way. Oh dear, how I wish he'd been as considerate with me! But that's the way always; yes, always."

"Well, who was he?"

"Why, he was an American gentleman, returning home from a tour in Europe. He saved me, as you have heard. I really don't remember much about it, only there was a terrible rush of water, and a strong arm seized me, and I thought it was papa all the time. And I found myself carried, I don't know how, through the waves, and then I fainted; and I really don't know any thing about it except papa's story."

Mrs. Willoughby looked at Minnie in silence, but said nothing.

"And then, you know, he traveled with us, and papa thought he was one of the passengers, and was civil; and so he used to talk to me, and at last, at Montreal, he used to call on me."

"Where?"

"At your house, dearest."

"Why, how was that?"

"You could not leave your room, darling, so I used to go down."

"Oh, Minnie!"

"And he proposed to me there."

"Where? in my parlor?"

"Yes; in your parlor, dearest."

"I suppose it's not necessary for me to ask what you said."

"I suppose not," said Minnie, in a sweet voice. "He was so grand and so strong, and he never made any allusions to the wreck; and it was—the—the—very *first* time that any body ever—proposed; and so, you know, I didn't know how to take it, and I didn't want to hurt his feelings, and I couldn't deny that he had saved my life; and I don't know when I *ever* was so confused. It's awful, Kitty darling.

"And then, you know, darling," continued Minnie, "he went away, and used to write regularly every month. He came to see me once, and I was frightened to death almost. He is going to marry me next year. He used an awful expression, dearest. He told me he was a struggling man. Isn't that horrid? What is it, Kitty? Isn't it something very, very dreadful?"

"He writes still, I suppose?"

"Oh dear, yes."

Mrs. Willoughby was silent for some time.

"Oh, Minnie," said she at last, "what a trouble all this is! How I wish you had been with me all this time!"

"Well, what made you go and get married?" said Minnie.

"Hush," said Mrs. Willoughby, sadly, "never mind. I've made up my mind to one thing, and that is, I will never leave you alone with a gentleman, unless—"

"Well, I'm sure I don't want the horrid creatures," said Minnie. "And you needn't be so unkind. I'm sure I don't see why people will come always and save my life wherever I go. I don't want them to. I don't want to have my life saved any more. I think it's dreadful to have men chasing me all over the

"HE BENT HIS HEAD DOWN, AND RAN HIS HAND THROUGH HIS BUSHY HAIR."

world. I'm afraid to stop in Italy, and I'm afraid to go back to England. Then I'm always afraid of that dreadful American. I suppose it's no use for me to go to the Holy Land, or Egypt, or Australia; for then my life would be saved by an Arab, or a New Zealander. And oh, Kitty, wouldn't it be dreadful to have some Arab proposing to me, or a Hindu! Oh, what *am* I to do?"

"Trust to me, darling. I'll get rid of Girasole. We will go to Naples. He has to stop at Rome; I know that. We will thus pass quietly away from him, without giving him any pain, and he'll soon forget all about it. As for the others, I'll stop this correspondence first, and then deal with them as they come."

"You'll never do it, never!" cried Minnie; "I know you won't. You don't know them."

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE CRATER OF VESUVIUS.

LORD HARRY HAWBURY had been wandering for three months on the Continent, and had finally found himself in Naples. It was always a favorite place of his, and he had established himself in comfortable quarters on the Strada Nuova, from the windows of which there was a magnificent view of the whole bay, with Vesuvius, Capri, Baiæ, and all the regions round about. Here an old friend had unexpectedly turned up in the person of Scone Dacres. Their friendship had been formed some five or six years before in South America, where they had made a hazardous journey in company across the continent, and had thus acquired a familiarity with one another which years of ordinary association would have failed to give. Scone Dacres was several years older than Lord Hawbury.

One evening Lord Hawbury had just finished his dinner, and was dawdling about in a listless way, when Dacres entered, quite unceremoniously, and flung himself into a chair by one of the windows.

"Any Bass, Hawbury?" was his only greeting, as he bent his head down, and ran his hand through his bushy hair.

"Lachryma Christi?" asked Hawbury, in an interrogative tone.

"No, thanks. That wine is a humbug. I'm beastly thirsty, and as dry as a cinder."

Hawbury ordered the Bass, and Dacres soon was refreshing himself with copious draughts.

The two friends presented a singular contrast. Lord Hawbury was tall and slim, with straight flaxen hair and flaxen whiskers, whose long, pendent points hung down to his shoulders. His thin face, somewhat pale, had an air of high refinement; and an ineradicable habit of lounging, together with a drawling intonation, gave him the appearance of being the laziest mortal alive. Dacres, on the other hand, was the very opposite of all this. He was as tall as Lord Hawbury, but was broad-shouldered and massive. He had a big head, a big mustache, and a thick beard. His hair was dark, and

covered his head in dense, bushy curls. His voice was loud, his manner abrupt, and he always sat bolt upright.

"Any thing up, Sconey?" asked Lord Hawbury, after a pause, during which he had been languidly gazing at his friend.

"Well, no, nothing, except that I've been up Vesuvius."

Lord Hawbury gave a long whistle.

"And how did you find the mountain?" he asked; "lively?"

"Rather so. In fact, infernally so," added Dacres, thoughtfully. "Look here, Hawbury, do you detect any smell of sulphur about me?"

"Sulphur! What in the name of—sulphur! Why, now that you mention it, I *do* notice something of a brimstone smell. Sulphur! Why, man, you're as strong as a lighted match. What have you been doing with yourself? Down inside, eh?"

Dacres made no answer for some time, but sat stroking his beard with his left hand, while his right held a cigar which he had just taken out of a box at his elbow. His eyes were fixed upon a point in the sky exactly half-way between Capri and Baiæ, and about ten degrees above the horizon.

"Hawbury," said he, solemnly, after about two minutes of portentous silence.

"Well, old man?"

"I've had an adventure."

"An adventure! Well, don't be oashful. Breathe forth the tale in this confiding ear."

"You see," said Dacres, "I started off this morning for a ride, and had no more intention of going to Vesuvius than to Jericho."

"I should hope not. What business has a fellow like you with Vesuvius—a fellow that has scaled Cotopaxi, and all that sort of thing? Not you."

Dacres put the cigar thoughtfully in his month, struck a light, and tried to light it, but couldn't. Then he bit the end off, which he had forgotten to do before. Then he gave three long, solemn, and portentous puffs. Then he took the cigar between his first and second fingers, and stretched his hand out toward Hawbury.

"Hawbury, my boy," said he again.

"All right."

"You remember the time when I got that bullet in Uruguay?"

"Yes."

"Well, I had a shot to-day."

"A shot! The deuce you had. Cool, too. Any of those confounded bandits about? I thought that was all rot."

"It wasn't a real shot; only figurative."

"Figurative!"

"Yes; it was a—a girl."

"By Jove!" cried Hawbury, starting up from an easy posture which he had secured for himself after fifteen minutes' shifting and changing. "A girl! You, Dacres, spooney! A fellow like you, and a girl! By Jove!"

Hawbury fell back again, and appeared to be vainly trying to grapple with the thought.

Dacres put his cigar between his lips again, and gave one or two puffs at it, but it had gone out. He pitched it out of the window, and struck his hand heavily on the arm of his chair.

"Yes, Hawbury, a girl; and spooney, too—as spooney as blazes; but I'll swear there isn't such another girl upon the whole face of the earth; and when you bear in mind the fact that my observation, with extended view, has surveyed mankind from China to Peru, you'll be able to appreciate the value of my statement."

"All right, old man; and now for the adventure."

"The adventure? Well, you see, I started for a ride. Had a misty idea of going to Sorrento, and was jogging along among a million pigs or so at Portici, when I overtook a carriage that was going slowly along. There were three ladies in it. The backs of two of them were turned toward me, and I afterward saw that one was old—no doubt the chaperon—and the other was young. But the third lady, Hawbury— Well, it's enough to say that I, who have seen all women in all lands, have never seen any thing like her. She was on the front seat, with her face turned toward me. She was small, a perfect blonde; hair short and curling; a round, girlish face; dimpled cheeks, and little mouth. Her eyes were large and blue; and, as she looked at me, I saw such a bewitching innocence, such plaintive entreaty, such pathetic trust, such helpless, childlike— I'll be hanged if I can find words to express what I want to say. The English language doesn't contain them."

"Do it in Latin, then, or else skip the whole description. All the same. I know the whole story by heart. Love's young dream, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Well," continued Dacres, "there was something so confoundedly bewitching in the little girl's face that I found myself keeping on at a slow pace in the rear of the carriage, and feasting on her looks. Of course I wasn't rude about it or demonstrative."

"Oh, of course. No demonstration. It's nothing to ride behind a carriage for several hours, and 'feast' one's self on a pretty girl's looks! But go on, old man."

"Oh, I managed it without giving offense. You see, there was such a beastly lot of pigs, peasants, cows, dirty children, lazaroni, and all that sort of thing, that it was simply impossible to go any faster; so you see I was compelled to ride behind. Sometimes, indeed, I fell a good distance back."

"And then caught up again to resume the 'feast?'"

"Well—yes."

"But I don't see what this has to do with your going to Vesuvius."

"It has every thing to do. You see, I started without any fixed purpose, and after I saw this carriage, I kept on insensibly after it."

"Oh, I see—yes. By Jove!"

"And they drove up as far as they could."

"Yes?"

"And I followed. You see, I had nothing else to do—and that little girl! Besides, it was the most natural thing in the world for me to be going up; and the fact that I was bent on the same errand as themselves was sufficient to account for my being near the carriage, and would prevent them from supposing that I was following them. So, you see, I followed, and at length they stopped at the Hermitage. I left my horse there, and strolled forward, without going very far away; my only idea was to keep the girl in sight. I had no idea that they would go any further. To ascend the cone seemed quite out of the question. I thought they would rest at the Hermitage, drink some Lachryma Christi, and go back. But to my surprise, as I was walking about, I saw the two young ladies come out and go toward the cone.

"I kept out of the way, as you may suppose, and watched them, wondering what idea they had. As they passed I heard the younger one—the child-angel, you know, *my* girl—teasing the other to make the ascent of the cone, and the other seemed to be quite ready to agree to the proposal.

"Now, as far as the mere ascent is concerned, of course you know *that* is not much. The guides were there with straps and chairs, and that sort of thing, all ready, so that there was no difficulty about that. The real difficulty was in these girls going off unattended; and I could only account for it by supposing that the chaperon knew nothing whatever about their proposal. No doubt the old lady was tired, and the young ones went out, as *she* supposed, for a stroll; and now, as *they* proposed, this stroll meant nothing less than an ascent of the cone. After all, there is nothing surprising in the fact that a couple of active and spirited girls should attempt this. From the Hermitage it does not seem to be at all difficult, and they had no idea of the actual nature of the task.

"What made it worse, however, was the state of the mountain at this particular time. I don't know whether you have taken the trouble to raise your eyes so high as the top of Vesuvius—"

Hawbury languidly shook his head.

"Well, I supposed not; but if you had taken the trouble, you would have noticed an ugly cloud which is generally regarded here as ominous. This morning, you know, there was an unusually large canopy of very dirty smoke overhead. I knew by the look of things that it was not a very pleasant place to go to. But of course they could not be supposed to know any thing of the kind, and their very ignorance made them rash.

"Well, I walked along after them, not knowing what might turn up, but determined to keep them in sight. Those beggars with chairs were not to be trusted, and the ladies had gold enough about them to tempt violence. What a reckless old devil of a chaperon she was, to let those young girls go! So I walked on, cursing all the time the conventionalities of civilization that prevented me from giving them warning. They were rushing straight on into danger, and I had to keep silent.

"On reaching the foot of the cone a lot of fellows came up to them, with chairs and straps, and that sort of thing. They employed some of them, and, mounting the chairs, they were carried up, while I walked up by myself at a distance from which I could observe all that was going on. The girls were quite merry, appeared to be enchanted with their ride up the cone, enjoyed the novelty of the sensation, and I heard their lively chatter and their loud peals of ringing laughter, and longed more than ever to be able to speak to them.

"Now the little girl that I had first seen—the child-angel, you know—seemed, to my amazement, to be more adventurous than the other. By her face you would suppose her to be as timid as a dove, and yet on this occasion she was the one who proposed the ascent, urged on her companion, and answered all her objections. Of course she could not have really been so plucky as she seemed. For my part, I believe the other one had more real pluck of the two, but it was the child-angel's ignorance that made her so bold. She went up the cone as she would have gone up stairs, and looked at the smoke as she would have looked at a rolling cloud.

"At length the bearers stopped, and signified to the girls that they could not go any further. The girls could not speak Italian, or any other language apparently than English, and therefore could not very well make out what the bearers were trying to say, but by their gestures they might have known that they were warning them against going any further. One might have supposed that no warning would have been needed, and that one look upward would have been enough. The top of the cone rose for upward of a hundred feet above them, its soil composed of lava blocks and ashes intermingled with sulphur. In this soil there were a million cracks and crevices, from which sulphurous smoke was issuing; and the smoke, which was but faint and thin near where they stood, grew denser farther up, till it intermingled with the larger volumes that rolled up from the crater.

"Now, as I stood there, I suddenly heard a wild proposal from the child-angel.

"'Oh, Ethel,' she said, 'I've a great mind to go up—'"

Here Hawbury interrupted his friend:

"What's that? Was that her friend's name?" he asked, with some animation. "Ethel?—odd, too. Ethel? H'm. Ethel? Brunette, was she?"

"Yes."

"Odd, too; infernally odd. But, pooh! what rot! Just as though there weren't a thousand Ethels!"

"What's that you're saying about Ethel?" asked Dacres.

"Oh, nothing, old man. Excuse my interrupting you. Go ahead. How did it end?"

"'Well, the child-angel said, 'Ethel, I've a great mind to go up.'

"This proposal Ethel scouted in horror and consternation.

"'You must not—you shall not!' she cried.

"'Oh, it's nothing, it's nothing,' said the child-angel. 'I'm dying to take a peep into the crater. It must be awfully funny. Do come; do, do come, Ethel darling.'

"'Oh, Minnie, don't,' cried the other, in great alarm. And I now learned that the child-angel's name was Minnie. 'Minnie,' she cried, clinging to the child-angel, 'you must not go. I would not have come up if I had thought you would be so unreasonable.'

"'Ethel,' said the other, 'you are really getting to be quite a scold. How ridiculous it is in you to set yourself up in this place as a duenna! How can I help going up? and only one peep. And I never saw a crater in my life, and I'm dying to know what it looks like. I know it's awfully funny; and it's horrid in you to be so unkind about it. And I really must go. Won't you come? Do, do, dear—dearest darling, do—do—do!'

"Ethel was firm, however, and tried to dissuade the other, but to no purpose; for at length, with a laugh, the child-angel burst away, and skipped lightly up the slope toward the crater.

"'Just one peep,' she said. 'Come, Ethel, I must, I really must, you know.'

"She turned for an instant as she said this, and I saw the glory of her child-face as it was irradiated by a smile of exquisite sweetness. The play of feature, the light of her eyes, and the expression of innocence and ignorance unconscious of danger, filled me with profound sadness. And there was I, standing alone, seeing that sweet child flinging herself to ruin, and yet unable to prevent her, simply because I was bound hand and foot by the infernal restrictions of a miserable and a senseless conventionality. Dash it, I say!"

As Dacres growled out this Hawbury elevated his eyebrows, and stroked his long, pendent whiskers lazily with his left hand, while with his right he drummed on the table near him.

"I SAW HER TURN AND WAVE HER HAND IN TRIUMPH."

"Well," resumed Dacres, "the child-angel ran up for some distance, leaving Ethel behind. Ethel called after her for some time, and then began to follow her up. Meanwhile the guides, who had thus far stood apart, suddenly caught sight of the child-angel's figure, and, with a loud warning cry, they ran after her. They seemed to me, however, to be a lazy lot, for they scarce got up as far as the place where Ethel was. Now, you know, all this time I was doomed to inaction. But at this juncture I strolled carelessly along, pretending not to see any thing in particular; and so, taking up an easy attitude, I waited for the dénouement. It was a terrible position too. That child-angel! I would have laid down my life for her, but I had to stand idle, and see her rush to fling her life away. And all because I had not happened to have the mere formality of an introduction.

"Well, you know, I stood there waiting for the dénouement. Now it happened that, as the child-angel went up, a brisk breeze had

started, which blew away all the smoke, so that she went along for some distance without any apparent inconvenience. I saw her reach the top; I saw her turn and wave her hand in triumph. Then I saw her rush forward quickly and nimbly straight toward the crater. She seemed to go down into it. And then the wind changed or died away, or both, for there came a vast cloud of rolling smoke, black, cruel, suffocating; and the mountain crest and the child-angel were snatched from my sight.

"I was roused by a shriek from Ethel. I saw her rush up the slope, and struggle in a vain endeavor to save her friend. But before she had taken a dozen steps down came the rolling smoke, black, wrathful, and sulphurous; and I saw her crouch down and stagger back, and finally emerge pale as death, and gasping for breath. She saw me as I stood there; in fact, I had moved a little nearer.

"'Oh, Sir,' she cried, 'save her! Oh, my God, she's lost!'

"This was very informal, you know, and all that sort of thing; but *she* had broken the ice, and had accosted *me;* so I waived all ceremony, and considered the introduction sufficient. I took off my hat, and told her to calm herself.

"But she only wrung her hands, and implored me to save her friend.

"And now, my boy, lucky was it for me that my experience at Cotopaxi and Popocatepetl had been so thorough and so peculiar. My knowledge came into play at this time. I took my felt hat and put it over my mouth, and then tied it around my neck so that the felt rim came over my cheeks and throat. Thus I secured a plentiful supply of air, and the felt acted as a kind of ventilator to prevent the access to my lungs of too much of the sulphurous vapor. Of course such a contrivance would not be good for more than five minutes; but then, you know, five minutes were all that I wanted.

"So up I rushed, and, as the slope was only about a hundred feet, I soon reached the top. Here I could see nothing whatever. The tremendous smoke-clouds rolled all about on every side, enveloping me in their dense folds, and shutting every thing from view. I heard the cry of the asses of guides, who were howling where I left them below, and were crying to me to come back—the infernal idiots! The smoke was impenetrable; so I got down on my hands and knees and groped about. I was on her track, and knew she could not be far away. I could not spend more than five minutes there, for my felt hat would not assist me any longer. About two minutes had already passed. Another minute was taken up in creeping about on my hands and knees. A half minute more followed. I was in despair. The child-angel I saw must have run in much further than I had supposed, and perhaps I could not find her at all. A sickening fear came to me that she had grown dizzy, or had slid down over the loose sand into the terrific abyss of the crater itself. So another half minute passed; and now only one minute was left."

"I don't see how you managed to be so confoundedly accurate in your reckoning. How was it? You didn't carry your watch in one hand, and feel about with the other, I suppose?"

"No; but I looked at my watch at intervals. But never mind that. Four minutes, as I said, were up, and only one minute remained, and that was not enough to take me back. I was at the last gasp already, and on the verge of despair, when suddenly, as I crawled on, there lay the child-angel full before me, within my reach.

"Yes," continued Dacres, after a pause, "there she lay, just in my grasp, just at my own last gasp. One second more and it must have been all up. She was senseless, of course. I caught her up; I rose and ran back as quick as I could, bearing my precious burden. She was as light as a feather—no weight at all. I carried her as tenderly as if she was a little baby. As I emerged from the smoke Ethel rushed up to me and set up a cry, but I told her to keep quiet and it would be all right. Then I directed the guides to carry her down, and I myself then carried down the child-angel.

"You see I wasn't going to give her up. I had had hard work enough getting her. Besides, the atmosphere up there was horrible. It was necessary, first of all, to get her down to the foot of the cone, where she could have pure air, and then resuscitate her. Therefore I directed the guides to take down Ethel in a chair, while I carried down the child-angel. They had to carry her down over the lava blocks, but I went to a part of the cone where it was all loose sand, and went down flying. I was at the bottom a full half hour before the others.

"Then I laid her upon the loose sand; and I swear to you, Hawbury, never in all my life have I seen such a sight. She lay there before my eyes a picture of loveliness beyond imagination—as beautiful as a dream—more like a child-angel than ever. Her hair clustered in golden curls over her white brow, her little hands were folded meekly over her breast, her lips were parted into a sweet smile, the gentle eyes no longer looked at me with the piteous, pleading, trustful, innocent expression which I had noticed in them before, and her hearing was deaf to the words of love and tenderness that I lavished upon her."

"Good!" muttered Hawbury; "you talk like a novel. Drive on, old man. I'm really beginning to feel excited."

"The fact is," said Dacres, "I have a certain set of expressions about the child-angel that will come whenever I begin to describe her."

"It strikes me, though, that you are getting on pretty well. You were speaking of 'love and tenderness.' Well?"

"Well, she lay there senseless, you know, and I gently unclasped her hands and began to

"I BENT DOWN CLOSE."

rub them. I think the motion of carrying her, and the fresh air, had both produced a favorable effect; for I had not rubbed her hands ten minutes when she gave a low sigh. Then I rubbed on, and her lips moved. I bent down close so as to listen, and I heard her say, in a low voice,

"'Am I at home?'

"'Yes,' said I, gently, for I thought it was best to humor her delirious fancy.

"Then she spoke again:

"'Is that you, papa dear?'

"'Yes, darling,' said I, in a low voice; and I kissed her in a kind of paternal way, so as to reassure her, and comfort her, and soothe her, and all that sort of thing, you know."

At this Hawbury burst into a shout of laughter.

"What the mischief are you making that beastly row about?" growled Dacres.

"Excuse me, old boy. I couldn't help it. It was at the idea of your doing the father so gravely."

"Well, am I not old enough to be her father? What else could I do? She had such a pleading, piteous way. By Jove! Besides, how did she know any thing about it? It wasn't as if she was in her senses. She really thought I *was* her father, you know. And I'm sure I almost felt as if I was, too."

"All right, old man, don't get huffy. Drive on."

"Well, you know, she kept her eyes closed, and didn't say another word till she heard the voice of Ethel at a distance. Then she opened her eyes, and got up on her feet. Then there was no end of a row—kissing, crying, congratulating, reproaching, and all that sort of thing. I withdrew to a respectful distance and waited. After a time they both came to me, and the child-angel gave me a look that made me long to be a father to her again. She held out her little hand, and I took it and pressed it, with my heart beating awfully. I was horribly embarrassed.

"'I'm awfully grateful to you,' she said; 'I'm sure I'd do any thing in the world to repay you. I'm sure I don't know what would have become of me if it hadn't been for you. And I hope you'll excuse me for putting you to so much

trouble. And, oh!' she concluded, half to herself, 'what *will* Kitty say now?' "

"Kitty! Who's Kitty?"

"I don't know."

"All right. Never mind. Drive on, old chap."

"Well, I mumbled something or other, and then offered to go and get their carriage. But they would not hear of it. The child-angel said she could walk. This I strongly dissuaded her from doing, and Ethel insisted that the men should carry her. This was done, and in a short time we got back to the Hermitage, where the old lady was in no end of a worry. In the midst of the row I slipped away, and waited till the carriage drove off. Then I followed at a sufficient distance not to be observed, and saw where their house was."

THE MEETING.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGINNING OF BLUNDERS.

DACRES paused now, and lighting a fresh cigar, smoked away at it in silence, with long and solemn and regular puffs. Hawbury watched him for some time, with a look of dreamy curiosity and lazy interest. Then he rose, and dawdled about the room for a few minutes. Then he lighted a cigar, and finally, resuming his seat, he said:

'By Jove!"

acres puffed on.

"I'm beginning to think," said Hawbury, "that your first statement is correct. You are shot, my boy—hit hard—and all that; and now I should like to ask you one question."

"Ask away."

"What are you going to do about it? Do you intend to pursue the acquaintance?"

"Of course. Why not?"

"What do you intend to do next?"

"Next? Why, call on her, and inquire after her health."

"Very good."

"Well, have you any thing to say against that?"

"Certainly not. Only it surprises me a little."

"Why?"

"Because I never thought of Scone Dacres as a marrying man, and can't altogether grapple with the idea."

"I don't see why a fellow shouldn't marry if he wants to," said Dacres. "What's the matter with me that I shouldn't get married as well as lots of fellows?"

"No reason in the world, my dear boy. Marry as many wives as you choose. My remark referred merely to my own idea of you, and not to any thing actually innate in your character. So don't get huffy at a fellow."

Some further conversation followed, and Dacres finally took his departure, full of thoughts about his new acquaintance, and racking his brains to devise some way of securing access to her.

On the following evening he made his appearance once more at Hawbury's rooms.

"Well, old man, what's up? Any thing more about the child-angel?"

"Well, a little. I've found out her name."

"Ah! What is it?"

"Fay. Her name is Minnie Fay."

"Minnie Fay. I never heard of the name before. Who are her people?"

"She is traveling with Lady Dalrymple."

"The Dowager, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Who are the other ladies?"

"Well, I don't exactly remember."

"Didn't you find out?"

"Yes; I heard all their names, but I've forgotten. I know one of them is the child-angel's sister, and the other is her cousin. The one I saw with her was probably the sister."

"What, the one named Ethel?"

"Yes."

"Ethel—Ethel Fay. H'm," said Hawbury, in a tone of disappointment. "I knew it would be so. There are so many Ethels about."

"What's that?"

"Oh, nothing. I once knew a girl named Ethel, and— Well, I had a faint idea that it would be odd if this should be the one. But there's no such chance."

"Oh, the name Ethel is common enough."

"Well, and didn't you find out any thing about her people?"

"Whose—Ethel's?"

"Your child-angel's people."

"No. What do I care about her people? They might be Jews or Patagonians for all I care."

"Still I should think your interest in her would make you ask."

"Oh no; my interest refers to herself, not

to her relatives. Her sister Ethel is certainly a deuced pretty girl, though."

"Sconey, my boy, I'm afraid you're getting demoralized. Why, I remember the time when you regarded the whole female race with a lofty scorn and a profound indifference that was a perpetual rebuke to more inflammable natures. But now what a change! Here you are, with a finely developed eye for female beauty, actually reveling in dreams of child-angels and their sisters. By Jove!"

"Nonsense," said Dacres.

"Well, drive on, and tell all about it. You've seen her, of course?"

"Oh yes."

"Did you call?"

"Yes; she was not at home. I went away with a snubbed and subdued feeling, and rode along near the Villa Reale, when suddenly I met the carriage with Lady Dalrymple and the child-angel. She knew me at once, and gave a little start. Then she looked awfully embarrassed. Then she turned to Lady Dalrymple; and by the time I had got up the carriage had stopped, and the ladies both looked at me and bowed. I went up, and they both held out their hands. Lady Dalrymple then made some remarks expressive of gratitude, while the child-angel sat and fastened her wonderful eyes on me, and threw at me such a pleading, touching, entreating, piteous, grateful, beseeching look, that I fairly collapsed.

"When Lady Dalrymple stopped, she turned to her and said:

"'And oh, aunty darling, did you *ever* hear of any thing like it? It was *so* brave. Wasn't it an awfully plucky thing to do, now? And I was really inside the crater! I'm sure *I* never could have done such a thing—no, not even for my *own papa!* Oh, how I do *wish* I could do something to show how *awfully* grateful I am! And, aunty darling, I do *wish* you'd tell me what to do.'

"All this quite turned my head, and I couldn't say any thing; but sat on my saddle, devouring the little thing with my eyes, and drinking in the wonderful look which she threw at me. At last the carriage started, and the ladies, with a pleasant smile, drove on. I think I stood still there for about five minutes, until I was nearly run down by one of those beastly Neapolitan calèches loaded with twenty or thirty natives."

"See here, old man, what a confoundedly good memory you have! You remember no end of a lot of things, and give all her speeches verbatim. What a capital newspaper reporter you'd make!"

"Oh, it's only *her* words, you know. She quickens my memory, and makes a different man of me."

"By Jove!"

"Yes, old chap, a different man altogether."

"So I say, by Jove! Head turned, eyes distorted, heart generally upset, circulation brought up to fever point, peace of mind gone, and a general mania in the place of the old self-reliance and content."

"Not content, old boy; I never had much of that."

"Well, we won't argue, will we? But as to the child-angel—what next? You'll call again?"

"Of course."

"When?"

"To-morrow."

"Strike while the iron is hot, hey? Well, old man, I'll stand by you. Still I wish you could find out who her people are, just to satisfy a legitimate curiosity."

"Well, I don't know the Fays, but Lady Dalrymple is her aunt; and I know, too, that she is a niece of Sir Gilbert Biggs."

"What!" cried Hawbury, starting. "Who? Sir what?"

"Sir Gilbert Biggs."

"Sir Gilbert Biggs?"

"Yes."

"Sir Gilbert Biggs! By Jove! Are you sure you are right? Come, now. Isn't there some mistake?"

"Not a bit of a mistake; she's a niece of Sir Gilbert. I remember that, because the name is a familiar one."

"Familiar!" repeated Hawbury; "I should think so. By Jove!"

Hawbury here relapsed into silence, and sat with a frown on his face, and a puzzled expression. At times he would mutter such words as, "Deuced odd!" "Confounded queer!" "What a lot!" "By Jove!" while Dacres looked at him in some surprise.

"Look here, old fellow!" said he at last. "Will you have the kindness to inform me what there is in the little fact I just mentioned to upset a man of your size, age, fighting weight, and general coolness of blood?"

"Well, there is a deuced odd coincidence about it, that's all."

"Coincidence with what?"

"Well, I'll tell some other time. It's a sore subject, old fellow. Another time, my boy. I'll only mention now that it's the cause of my present absence from England. There's a bother that I don't care to encounter, and Sir Gilbert Bigge's nieces are at the bottom of it."

"You don't mean this one, I hope?" cried Dacres, in some alarm.

"Heaven forbid! By Jove! No. I hope not."

"No, I hope not, by Jove!" echoed the other.

"Well, old man," said Hawbury, after a fit of silence, "I suppose you'll push matters on now, hard and fast, and launch yourself into matrimony?"

"Well—I—suppose—so," said Dacres, hesitatingly.

"You *suppose* so. Of course you will. Don't I know you, old chap? Impetuous, tenacious of purpose, iron will, one idea, and all that sort of thing. Of course you will; and you'll be married in a month."

"Well," said Dacres, in the same hesitating way, "not so soon as that, I'm afraid."

"Why not?"

"Why, I have to get the lady first."

"The lady; oh, she seems to be willing enough, judging from your description. Her pleading look at you. Why, man, there was love at first sight. Then tumbling down the crater of a volcano, and getting fished out. Why, man, what woman could resist a claim like that, especially when it is enforced by a man like Scone Dacres? And, by Jove! Sconey, allow me to inform you that I've always considered you a most infernally handsome man; and what's more, my opinion is worth something, by Jove!"

Hereupon Hawbury stretched his head and shoulders back, and pulled away with each hand at his long yellow pendent whiskers. Then he yawned. And then he slowly ejaculated,

"By Jove!"

"Well," said Dacres, thoughtfully, "there is something in what you say; and, to tell the truth, I think there's not a bad chance for me, so far as the lady herself is concerned; but the difficulty is not in that quarter."

"Not in that quarter! Why, where the mischief else could there be any difficulty, man?"

Dacres was silent.

"You're eager enough?"

Dacres nodded his head sadly.

"Eager! why, eager isn't the word. You're mad, man—mad as a March hare! So go in and win."

Dacres said nothing.

"You're rich, not over old, handsome, well born, well bred, and have saved the lady's life by extricating her from the crater of a volcano. She seems too young and childlike to have had any other affairs. She's probably just out of school; not been into society; not come out; just the girl. Confound these girls, I say, that have gone through engagements with other fellows!"

"Oh, as to that," said Dacres, "this little thing is just like a child, and in her very simplicity does not know what love is. Engagement! By Jove, I don't believe she knows the meaning of the word! She's perfectly fresh, artless, simple, and guileless. I don't believe she ever heard a word of sentiment or tenderness from any man in her life."

"Very likely; so where's the difficulty?"

"Well, to tell the truth, the difficulty is in my own affairs."

"Your affairs! Odd, too. What's up? I didn't know any thing had happened. That's too infernal bad, too."

"Oh, it's nothing of that sort; money's all right; no swindle. It's an affair of another character altogether."

"Oh!"

"And one, too, that makes me think that—" He hesitated.

"That what?"

"That I'd better start for Australia."

"Australia!"

"Yes."

"What's the meaning of that?"

"Why," said Dacres, gloomily, "it means giving up the child-angel, and trying to forget her—if I ever can."

"Forget her! What's the meaning of all this? Why, man, five minutes ago you were all on fire about her, and now you talk quietly about giving her up! I'm all adrift."

"Well, it's a mixed up matter."

"What is?"

"My affair."

"Your affair; something that has happened?"

"Yes. It's a sore matter, and I don't care to speak about it just now."

"Oh!"

"And it's the real cause why I don't go back to England."

"The mischief it is! Why, Dacres, I'll be hanged if you're not using the very words I myself used a few minutes ago."

"Am I?" said Dacres, gloomily.

"You certainly are; and that makes me think that our affairs are in a similar complication."

"Oh no; mine is very peculiar."

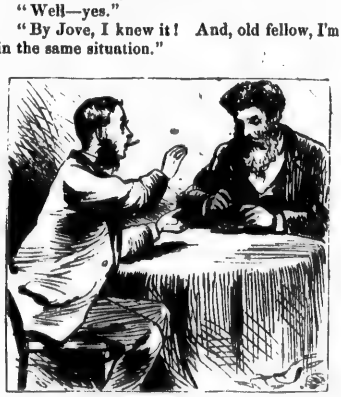
"Well, there's one thing I should like to ask, and you needn't answer unless you like."

"Well?"

"Doesn't your difficulty arise from some confounded woman or other?"

"Well—yes."

"By Jove, I knew it! And, old fellow, I'm in the same situation."



"BY JOVE, I KNEW IT!"

"Oh ho! So you're driven away from England by a woman?"

"Exactly."

Dacres sighed heavily.

"Yours can't be as bad as mine," said he, with a dismal look. "Mine is the worst scrape that ever you heard of. And look at me now, with the child-angel all ready to take me, and me not able to be taken. Confound the abominable complications of an accursed civilization, I say!"

"And I say, Amen!" said Hawbury.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIERY TRIAL.

"See here, old chap," said Hawbury, "I'm going to make a clean breast of it."

"Of what?"

"Of my affair."

"That's right," said Dacres, dolefully. "I should like of all things to hear it."

"You see I wouldn't tell you, only you yourself turn out to be in a similar situation, and so what I have to say may prove of use to you. At any rate, you may give me some useful suggestion.

"Very well, then," continued Hawbury—"to begin. You may remember that I told you when we met here where I had been passing the time since I saw you last."

Dacres nodded assent.

"Well, about two years ago I was in Canada. I went there for sport, and plunged at once into the wilderness. And let me tell you it's a very pretty country for hunting. Lots of game—fish, flesh, and fowl—from the cariboo down to the smallest trout that you would care to hook. Glorious country; magnificent forests waiting for the lumberman; air that acts on you like wine, or even better; rivers and lakes in all directions; no end of sport and all that sort of thing, you know. Have you ever been in Canada?"

"Only traveled through."

"Well, the next time you feel inclined for high art sport we'll go together, and have no end of fun—that is, if you're not married and done for, which, of course, you will be. No matter. I was saying that I was in a fine country. I spent a couple of months there with two or three Indians, and at length started for Ottawa on my way home. The Indians put me on the right path, after which I dismissed them, and set out alone with my gun and fishing-rod.

"The first day was all very well, and I slept well enough the first night; but on the morning of the second day I found the air full of smoke. However, I did not give much thought to that, for there had been a smoky look about the sky for a week, and the woods are always burning there, I believe, in one place or another. I kept on, and shot enough for food, and thus the second day passed. That evening the air was quite suffocating, and it was as hot as an oven. I struggled through the night, I don't know how; and then on the third day made another start. This third day was abominable. The atmosphere was beastly hot; the sky was a dull yellow, and the birds seemed to have all disappeared. As I went on it grew worse, but I found it was not because the fires were in front of me. On the contrary, they were behind me, and were driving on so that they were gradually approaching nearer. I could do my thirty miles a day even in that rough country, but the fires could do more. At last I came into a track that was a little wider than the first one. As I went on I met cattle which appeared stupefied. Showers of dust were in the air; the atmosphere was worse than ever, and I never had such difficulty in my life in walking along. I had to throw away my rifle and fishing-rod, and was just thinking of pitching my clothes after them, when suddenly I turned a bend in the path, and met a young girl full in the face.

"By Jove! I swear I never was so astounded in my life. I hurried up to her, and just began to ask where I was, when she interrupted me with a question of the same kind. By-the-way, I forgot to say that she was on horseback. The poor devil of a horse seemed to have had a deuced hard time of it too, for he was trembling from head to foot, though whether that arose from fatigue or fright I don't know. Perhaps it was both.

"Well, the girl was evidently very much alarmed. She was awfully pale; she was a monstrous pretty girl too—the prettiest by all odds I ever saw, and that's saying a good deal. By Jove! Well, it turned out that she had been stopping in the back country for a month, at a house somewhere up the river, with her father. Her father had gone down to Ottawa a week before, and was expected back on this day. She had come out to meet him, and had lost her way. She had been out for hours, and was completely bewildered. She was also frightened at the fires, which now seemed to be all around us. This she told me in a few words, and asked if I knew where the river was.

"Of course I knew no more than she did, and it needed only a few words from me to show her that I was as much in the dark as she was. I began to question her, however, as to this river, for it struck me that in the present state of affairs a river would not be a bad thing to have near one. In answer to my question she said that she had come upon this road from the woods on the left, and therefore it was evident that the river lay in that direction.

"I assured her that I would do whatever lay in my power; and with that I walked on in the direction in which I had been going, while she rode by my side. Some further questions as to the situation of the house where she had been staying showed me that it was on the banks of the river about fifty miles above Ottawa. By my own calculations I was about that distance away. It seemed to me, then, that she had got lost in the woods, and had wandered thus over some trail to the path where she had met me. Every thing served to show me that the river lay to the left, and so I resolved to turn in at the first path which I reached.

"At length, after about two miles, we came to a path which went into the woods. My companion was sure that this was the very one by which she had come out, and this confirmed the impression which the sight of it had given me. I thought it certainly must lead toward the river. So we turned into this path. I went first, and she followed, and so we went for about a couple of miles further.

"All this time the heat had been getting worse and worse. The air was more smoky than ever; my mouth was parched and dry. I breathed with difficulty, and could scarcely drag one leg after another. The lady was almost as much exhausted as I was, and suffered acutely, as I could easily see, though she uttered not a word of complaint. Her horse also suffered terribly, and did not seem able to bear her weight much longer. The poor brute trembled and staggered, and once or twice stopped, so that it was difficult to start him again. The road had gone in a winding way, but was not so crooked as I expected. I afterward found that she had gone by other paths until she had found herself in thick woods, and then on trying to retrace her way she had strayed into this path. If she had turned to the left on first reaching it, instead of to the right, the fate of each of us would have been different. Our meeting was no doubt the salvation of both.

"There was a wooded eminence in front, which we had been steadily approaching for some time. At last we reached the top, and here a scene burst upon us which was rather startling. The hill was high enough to command an extensive view, and the first thing that we saw was a vast extent of woods and water and smoke. By-and-by we were able to distinguish each. The water was the river, which could be seen for miles. Up the river toward the left the smoke arose in great volumes, covering every thing; while in front of us, and immediately between us and the river, there was a line of smoke which showed that the fires had penetrated there and had intercepted us.

"We stood still in bewilderment. I looked all around. To go back was as bad as to go forward, for there, also, a line of smoke arose which showed the progress of the flames. To the right there was less smoke; but in that direction there was only a wilderness, through which we could not hope to pass for any distance. The only hope was the river. If we could traverse the flames in that direction, so as to reach the water, we would be safe. In a few words I communicated my decision to my companion. She said nothing, but bowed her head in acquiescence.

"Without delaying any longer we resumed our walk. After about a mile we found ourselves compelled once more to halt. The view here was worse than ever. The path was now as wide as an ordinary road, and grew wider still as it went on. It was evidently used to haul logs down to the river, and as it approached the bank it grew steadily wider; but between us and the river the woods were all burning. The first rush of the fire was over, and now we looked forward and saw a vast array of columns—the trunks of burned trees—some blackened and charred, others glowing red. The ground below was also glowing red, with blackened spaces here and there.

"Still the burned tract was but a strip, and there lay our hope. The fire, by some strange means, had passed on a track not wider than a hundred yards, and this was what had to be traversed by us. The question was, whether we could pass through that or not. The same question came to both of us, and neither of us said a word. But before I could ask the lady about it, her horse became frightened at the flames. I advised her to dismount, for I knew that the poor brute could never be forced through those fires. She did so, and the horse, with a horrible snort, turned and galloped wildly away.

"I now looked around once more, and saw that there was no escape except in front. The flames were encircling us, and a vast cloud of smoke surrounded us every where, rising far up and rolling overhead. Cinders fell in immense showers, and the fine ashes, with which the air was filled, choked us and got into our eyes.

"'There is only one chance,' said I; 'and that is to make a dash for the river. Can you do it?'

"'I'll try,' she said.

"'We'll have to go through the fires.'

"She nodded.

"'Well, then,' I said, 'do as I say. Take off your sacque and wrap it around your head and shoulders.'

"She took off her sacque at this. It was a loose robe of merino or alpaca, or something of that sort, and very well suited for what I wanted. I wrapped it round her so as to protect her face, head, and shoulders; and taking off my coat I did the same.

"'Now,' said I, 'hold your breath as well as you can. You may keep your eyes shut. Give me your hand—I'll lead you.'

"Taking her hand I led her forward at a rapid pace. Once she fell, but she quickly recovered herself, and soon we reached the edge of the flames.

"I tell you what it is, my boy, the heat was terrific, and the sight was more so. The river was not more than a hundred yards away, but between us and it there lay what seemed as bad as the burning fiery furnace of Messrs. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. If I were now standing there, I don't think I could face it. But then I was with the girl; I had to save her. Fire was behind us, racing after us; water lay in front. Once there and we were safe. It was not a time to dawdle or hesitate, I can assure you.

"'Now,' said I, 'run for your life!'

"Grasping her hand more firmly, I started off with her at the full run. The place was terrible, and grew worse at every step. The road here was about fifty feet wide. On each side was the burning forest, with a row of burned trees like fiery columns, and the moss and underbrush still glowing beneath. To pass through that was a thing that it don't do to look back upon. The air was intolerable. I wrapped my coat tighter over my head; my arms were thus exposed, and I felt the heat on my hands. But that was nothing to the ter-

THE FIERY TRIAL.

ments th[illegible]ured from trying to breathe. Besides, [illegible] enormous effort of keeping up a run made breathing all the more difficult. A feeling of despair came over me. Already we had gone half the distance, but at that moment the space seemed lengthened out interminably, and I looked in horror at the rest of the way, with a feeling of the utter impossibility of traversing it.

"Suddenly the lady fell headlong. I stopped and raised her up. My coat fell off; I felt the fiery air all round my face and head. I called and screamed to the lady as I tried to raise her up; but she said nothing. She was as lifeless as a stone.

"Well, my boy, I thought it was all up with me; but I, at least, could stand, though I did not think that I could take another breath. As for the lady, there was no help for it; so I grasped her with all my strength, still keeping her head covered as well as I could, and slung her over my shoulders. Then away I ran. I don't remember much after that. I must have lost my senses then, and, what is more, I must have accomplished the rest of the journey in that semi-unconscious state.

"What I do remember is this—a wild plunge into the water; and the delicious coolness that I felt all around restored me, and I at once comprehended all. The lady was by my side; the shock and the cool water had restored her also. She was standing up to her shoulders just where she had fallen, and was panting and sobbing. I spoke a few words of good cheer, and then looked around for some place of refuge. Just where we stood there was nothing but fire and desolation, and it was necessary to go further away. Well, some distance out, about half-way across the river, I saw a little island, with rocky sides, and trees on the top. It looked safe and cool and inviting. I determined to try to get there. Some deals were in the water by the bank, which had probably floated down from some saw-mill. I took half a dozen of these, flung two or three more on top of them, and then told the lady my plan. It was to float out to the island by means of this raft. I offered to put her on it and let her float; but she refused, preferring to be in the water.

"The river was pretty wide here, and the water was shallow, so that we were able to wade for a long distance, pushing the raft before us. At length it became deep, and then the lady held on while I floated and tried to direct the raft toward the island. I had managed while wading to guide the raft up the stream, so that when we got into deep water the current carried us toward the island. At length we reached it without much difficulty, and then, utterly worn out, I fell down on the grass, and either fainted away or fell asleep.

"When I revived I had several very queer sensations. The first thing that I noticed was that I hadn't any whiskers."

"What! no whiskers?"

"No—all gone; and my eyebrows and mustache, and every wisp of hair from my head."

"See here, old fellow, do you mean to say that you've only taken one year to grow those infernally long whiskers that you have now?"

"It's a fact, my boy!"

"I wouldn't have believed it; but some fellows can do such extraordinary things. But drive on."

"Well, the next thing I noticed was that it was as smoky as ever. Then I jumped up and looked around. I felt quite dry, though it seemed as if I had just come from the river. As I jumped up and turned I saw my friend. She looked much better than she had. Her clothes also were quite dry. She greeted me with a mournful smile, and rose up from the trunk of a tree where she had been sitting, and made inquiries after my health with the most earnest and tender sympathy.

"I told her I was all right, laughed about my hair, and inquired very anxiously how she was. She assured me that she was as well as ever. Some conversation followed; and then, to my amazement, I found that I had slept for an immense time, or had been unconscious, whichever it was, and that the adventure had

"ALL GONE; MY EYEBROWS, AND MUSTACHE, AND EVERY WISP OF HAIR FROM MY HEAD."

taken place on the preceding day. It was now about the middle of the next day. You may imagine how confounded I was at that.

"The air was still abominably close and smoky; so I looked about the island, and found a huge crevice in the rocks, which was almost a cave. It was close by the water, and was far cooler than outside. In fact, it was rather comfortable than otherwise. Here we took refuge, and talked over our situation. As far as we could see, the whole country was burned up. A vast cloud of smoke hung over all. One comfort was that the glow had ceased on the river-bank, and only a blackened forest now remained, with giant trees arising, all blasted. We found that our stay would be a protracted one.

"The first thing that I thought of was food. Fortunately I had my hooks and lines; so I cut a pole, and fastening my line to it, I succeeded in catching a few fish.

"We lived there for two days on fish in that manner. The lady was sad and anxious. I tried to cheer her up. Her chief trouble was the fear that her father was lost. In the course of our conversations I found out that her name was Ethel Orne."

"Ethel Orne?"

"Yes."

"Don't think I ever heard the name before. Orne? No, I'm sure I haven't. It isn't Horn?"

"No; Orne—O R N E. Oh, there's no trouble about that.

"Well, I rather enjoyed this island life, but she was awfully melancholy; so I hit upon a plan for getting away. I went to the shore and collected a lot of the deals that I mentioned, and made a very decent sort of raft. I found a pole to guide it with, cut a lot of brush for Ethel, and then we started, and floated down the river. We didn't have any accidents. The only bother was that she was too confoundedly anxious about me, and wouldn't let me work. We went ashore every evening. We caught fish enough to eat. We were afloat three days, and, naturally enough, became very well acquainted."

Hawbury stopped, and sighed.

"I tell you what it is, Dacres," said he,

"there never lived a nobler, more generous, and at the same time a braver soul than Ethel Orne. She never said a word about gratitude and all that, but there was a certain quiet look of devotion about her that gives me a deuced queer feeling now when I think of it all."

"And I dare say— But no matter."

"What?"

"Well, I was only going to remark that, under the circumstances, there might have been a good deal of quiet devotion about you."

Hawbury made no reply, but sat silent for a time.

"Well, go on, man; don't keep me in suspense."

"Let me see—where was I? Oh! floating on the raft. Well, we floated that way, as I said, for three days, and at the end of that time we reached a settlement. Here we found a steamer, and went on further, and finally reached Ottawa. Here she went to the house of a friend. I called on her as soon as possible, and found her in fearful anxiety. She had learned that her father had gone up with a Mr. Willoughby, and neither had been heard from.

"Startled at this intelligence, I instituted a search myself. I could not find out any thing, but only that there was good reason to believe that both of the unhappy gentlemen had perished. On returning to the house to call on Ethel, about a week after, I found that she had received full confirmation of this dreadful intelligence, and had gone to Montreal. It seems that Willoughby's wife was a relative of Ethel's, and she had gone to stay with her. I longed to see her, but of course I could not intrude upon her in her grief; and so I wrote to her, expressing all the condolence I could. I told her that I was going to Europe, but would return in the following year. I couldn't say any more than that, you know. It wasn't a time for sentiment, of course.

"Well, I received a short note in reply. She said she would look forward to seeing me again with pleasure, and all that; and that she could never forget the days we had spent together.

"So off I went, and in the following year I returned. But on reaching Montreal, what was my disgust, on calling at Mrs. Willoughby's, to find that she had given up her house, sold her furniture, and left the city. No one knew any thing about her, and they said that she had only come to the city a few months before her bereavement, and after that had never made any acquaintances. Some said she had gone to the United States; others thought she had gone to Quebec; others to England; but no one knew any thing more."

CHAPTER VII.

A STARTLING REVELATION.

"It seems to me, Hawbury," said Dacres, after a period of thoughtful silence—"it seems to me that when you talk of people having their heads turned, you yourself comprehend the full meaning of that sensation?"

"Somewhat."

"You knocked under at once, of course, to your Ethel?"

"Yes."

"And feel the same way toward her yet?"

"Yes."

"Hit hard?"

"Yes; and that's what I'm coming to. The fact is, my whole business in life for the last year has been to find her out."

"You haven't dawdled so much, then, as people suppose?"

"No; that's all very well to throw people off a fellow's scent; but you know me well enough, Dacres; and we didn't dawdle much in South America, did we?"

"That's true, my boy; but as to this lady, what is it that makes it so hard for you to find her? In the first place, is she an American?"

"Oh no."

"Why not?"

"Oh, accent, manner, tone, idiom, and a hundred other things. Why, of course, you know as well as I that an American lady is as different from an English as a French or a German lady is. They may be all equally ladies, but each nation has its own peculiarities."

"Is she Canadian?"

"Possibly. It is not always easy to tell a Canadian lady from an English. They imitate us out there a good deal. I could tell in the majority of cases, but there are many who can not be distinguished from us very easily. And Ethel may be one."

"Why mayn't she be English?"

"She may be. It's impossible to perceive any difference."

"Have you ever made any inquiries about her in England?"

"No; I've not been in England much, and from the way she talked to me I concluded that her home was in Canada."

"Was her father an Englishman?"

"I really don't know."

"Couldn't you find out?"

"No. You see he had but recently moved to Montreal, like Willoughby; and I could not find any people who were acquainted with him."

"He may have been English all the time."

"Yes."

"And she too."

"By Jove!"

"And she may be in England now."

Hawbury started to his feet, and stared in silence at his friend for several minutes.

"By Jove!" he cried; "if I thought that, I swear I'd start for home this evening, and hunt about every where for the representatives of the Orne family. But no—surely it can't be possible."

"Were you in London last season?"

"No."

"Well, how do you know but that she was there?"

"By Jove!"

"And the belle of the season, too?"

"She would be if she were there, by Jove!"

"Yes, if there wasn't another present that I wot of."

"Well, we won't argue about that; besides, I haven't come to the point yet."

"The point?"

"Yes, the real reason why I'm here, when I'm wanted home."

"The real reason? Why, haven't you been telling it to me all along?"

"Well, no; I haven't got to the point yet."

"Drive on, then, old man."

"Well, you know," continued Hawbury, "after hunting all through Canada I gave up in despair, and concluded that Ethel was lost to me, at least for the present. That was only about six or seven months ago. So I went home, and spent a month in a shooting-box on the Highlands; then I went to Ireland to visit a friend; and then to London. While there I got a long letter from my mother. The good soul was convinced that I was wasting my life; she urged me to settle down, and finally informed me that she had selected a wife for me. Now I want you to understand, old boy, that I fully appreciated my mother's motives. She was quite right, I dare say, about my wasting my life; quite right, too, about the benefit of settling down; and she was also very kind to take all the trouble of selecting a wife off my hands. Under other circumstances I dare say I should have thought the matter over, and perhaps I should have been induced even to go so far as to survey the lady from a distance, and argue the point with my mother pro and con. But the fact is, the thing was distasteful, and wouldn't bear thinking about, much less arguing. I was too lazy to go and explain the matter, and writing was not my forte. Besides, I didn't want to thwart my mother in her plans, or hurt her feelings; and so the long and the short of it is, I solved the difficulty and cut the knot by crossing quietly over to Norway. I wrote a short note to my mother, making no allusion to her project, and since then I've been gradually working my way down to the bottom of the map of Europe, and here I am."

"You didn't see the lady, then?"

"No."

"Who was she?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know the lady?"

"No."

"Odd, too! Haven't you any idea? Surely her name was mentioned?"

"No; my mother wrote in a roundabout style, so as to feel her way. She knew me, and feared that I might take a prejudice against the lady. No doubt I should have done so. She only alluded to her in a general way."

"A general way?"

"Yes; that is, you know, she mentioned the fact that the lady was a niece of Sir Gilbert Biggs."

"What!" cried Dacres, with a start.

"A niece of Sir Gilbert Biggs," repeated Hawbury.

"A niece—of—Sir Gilbert Biggs?" said Dacres, slowly. "Good Lord!"

"Yes; and what of that?"

"Very much. Don't you know that Minnie Fay is a niece of Sir Gilbert Biggs?"

"By Jove! So she is. I remember being startled when you told me that, and for a moment an odd fancy came to me. I wondered whether your child-angel might not be the identical being about whom my poor dear mother went into such raptures. Good Lord! what a joke! By Jove!"

"A joke!" growled Dacres. "I don't see any joke in it. I remember when you said that Biggs's nieces were at the bottom of your troubles, I asked whether it might be this one."

"So you did, old chap; and I replied that I hoped not. So you need not shake your gory locks at me, my boy."

"But I don't like the looks of it."

"Neither do I."

"Yes, but you see it looks as though she had been already set apart for you especially."

"And pray, old man, what difference can that make, when I don't set myself apart for any thing of the kind?"

Dacres sat in silence with a gloomy frown over his brow.

"Besides, are you aware, my boy, of the solemn fact that Biggs's nieces are legion?" said Hawbury. "The man himself is an infernal old bloke; and as to his nieces—heavens and earth!—old! old as Methuselah; and as to this one, she must be a grandniece—a second generation. She's not a true, full-blooded niece. Now the lady I refer to was one of the original Biggs's nieces. There's no mistake whatever about that, for I have it in black and white, under my mother's own hand."

"Oh, she would select the best of them for you."

"No, she wouldn't. How do you know that?"

"There's no doubt about that."

"It depends upon what you mean by the best. The one *you* call the best might not seem so to *her*, and so on. Now I dare say she's picked out for me a great, raw-boned, red-headed niece, with a nose like a horse. And she expects me to marry a woman like that! with a pace like a horse! Good Lord!"

And Hawbury leaned back, lost in the immensity of that one overwhelming idea.

"Besides," said he, standing up, "I don't care if she was the angel Gabriel. I don't want any of Biggs's nieces. I won't have them. By Jove! And am I to be entrapped into a plan like that? I want Ethel. And what's more, I will have her, or go without. The child-angel may be the very identical one that my mother selected, and if you assert that she is, I'll be hanged if I'll argue the point. I only say this, that it doesn't alter my position in the slightest degree. I don't want her. I won't

have her. I don't want to see her. I don't care if the whole of Biggs's nieces, in solemn conclave, with old Biggs at their head, had formally discussed the whole matter, and finally resolved unanimously that she should be mine. Good Lord, man! don't you understand how it is? What the mischief do I care about any body? Do you think I went through that fiery furnace for nothing? And what do you suppose that life on the island meant? Is all that nothing? Did you ever live on an island with the child-angel? Did you ever make a raft for her and fly? Did you ever float down a river current between banks burned black by raging fires, feeding her, soothing her, comforting her, and all the while feeling in a general fever about her? You hauled her out of a crater, did you? By Jove! And what of that? Why, that furnace that I pulled Ethel out of was worse than a hundred of your craters. And yet, after all that, you think that I could be swayed by the miserable schemes of a lot of Biggs's nieces! And you scowl at a fellow, and get huffy and jealous. By Jove!"

After this speech, which was delivered with unusual animation, Hawbury lighted a cigar, which he puffed at most energetically.

"All right, old boy," said Dacres. "A fellow's apt to judge others by himself, you know. Don't make any more set speeches, though. I begin to understand your position. Besides, after all—"

Dacres paused, and the dark frown that was on his brow grew still darker.

"After all what?" asked Hawbury, who now began to perceive that another feeling besides jealousy was the cause of his friend's gloomy melancholy.

"Well, after all, you know, old fellow, I fear I'll have to give her up."

"Give her up?"

"Yes."

"That's what you said before, and you mentioned Australia, and that rot."

"The more I think of it," said Dacres, dismally, and regarding the opposite wall with a steady yet mournful stare—"the more I think of it, the more I see that there's no such happiness in store for me."

"Pooh, man! what is it all about? This is the secret that you spoke about, I suppose?"

"Yes; and it's enough to put a barrier between me and her. Was I jealous? Did I seem huffy? What an idiot I must have been! Why, old man, I can't do any thing or say any thing."

"The man's mad," said Hawbury, addressing himself to a carved tobacco-box on the table.

"Mad? Yes, I was mad enough in ever letting myself be overpowered by this bright dream. Here have I been giving myself up to a phantom—an empty illusion—and now it's all over. My eyes are open."

"You may as well open my eyes too; for I'll be hanged if I can see my way through this!"

"Strange! strange! strange!" continued Dacres, in a kind of soliloquy, not noticing Hawbury's words. "How a man will sometimes forget realities, and give himself up to dreams! It was my dream of the child-angel that so turned my brain. I must see her no more."

"Very well, old boy," said Hawbury. "Now speak Chinese a little for variety. I'll understand you quite as well. I will, by Jove!"

"And then, for a fellow that's had an experience like mine—before and since," continued Dacres, still speaking in the tone of one who was meditating aloud—"to allow such an idea even for a moment to take shape in his brain! What an utter, unmitigated, unmanageable, and unimprovable idiot, ass, dolt, and blockhead! Confound such a man! I say; confound him!"

"CONFOUND SUCH A MAN! I SAY."

And as Dacres said this he brought his fist down upon the table near him with such an energetic crash that a wine-flask was sent spinning on the floor, where its ruby contents splashed out in a pool, intermingled with fragments of glass.

Dacres was startled by the crash, and looked at it for a while in silence. Then he raised his head and looked at his friend. Hawbury encountered his glance without any expression. He merely sat and smoked and passed his fingers through his pendent whiskers.

"Excuse me," said Dacres, abruptly.

"Certainly, my dear boy, a thousand times; only I hope you will allow me to remark that your style is altogether a new one, and during the whole course of our acquaintance I do not remember seeing it before. You have a melodramatic way that is overpowering. Still I don't see why you should swear at yourself in a place like Naples, where there are so many other things to swear at. It's a waste of human energy, and I don't understand it. We usedn't to indulge in soliloquies in South America, used we?"

"No, by Jove! And look here, old chap,

"HAWBURY SANK BACK IN HIS SEAT, OVERWHELMED."

you'll overlook this little outburst, won't you? In South America I was always cool, and you did the hard swearing, my boy. I'll be cool again; and what's more, I'll get back to South America again as soon as I can. Once on the pampas, and I'll be a man again. I tell you what it is, I'll start to-morrow. What do you say? Come."

"Oh no," said Hawbury, coolly; "I can't do that. I have business, you know."

"Business?"

"Oh yes, you know—Ethel, you know."

"By Jove! so you have. That alters the matter."

"But in any case I wouldn't go, nor would you. I still am quite unable to understand you. Why you should grow desperate, and swear at yourself, and then propose South America, is quite beyond me. Above all, I don't yet see any reason why you should give up your child-angel. You were all raptures but a short time since. Why are you so cold now?"

"I'll tell you," said Dacres.

"So you said ever so long ago."

"It's a sore subject, and difficult to speak about."

"Well, old man, I'm sorry for you; and don't speak about it at all if it gives you pain."

"Oh, I'll make a clean breast of it. You've told your affair, and I'll tell mine. I dare say I'll feel all the better for it."

"Drive on, then, old man."

Dacres rose, took a couple of glasses of beer in quick succession, then resumed his seat, then picked out a cigar from the box with unusual fastidiousness, then drew a match, then lighted the cigar, then sent out a dozen heavy volumes of smoke, which encircled him so completely that he became quite concealed from Hawbury's view. But even this cloud did not seem sufficient to correspond with the gloom of his soul. Other clouds rolled forth, and still others, until all their congregated folds encircled him, and in the midst there was a dim vision of a big head, whose stiff, high, curling, crisp hair, and massive brow, and dense beard, seemed like some living manifestation of cloud-compelling Jove.

For some time there was silence, and Hawbury said nothing, but waited for his friend to speak.

At last a voice was heard—deep, solemn, awful, portentous, ominous, sorrow-laden, weird, mysterious, prophetic, obscure, gloomy, doleful, dismal, and apocalyptic.

"*Hawbury!*"

"Well, old man?"

"HAWBURY!"

"All right."

"Are you listening?"

"Certainly."

"*Well—I'm—married!*"

Hawbury sprang to his feet as though he had been shot.

"What!" he cried.

"*I'm married!*"

"You're what? Married? *You! married!* Scone Dacres! not you—not *married!*"

"*I'm married!*"

"Good Lord!"

"*I'm married!*"

Hawbury sank back in his seat, overwhelmed by the force of this sudden and tremendous revelation. For some time there was a deep silence. Both were smoking. The clouds rolled forth from the lips of each, and curled over their heads, and twined in voluminous folds, and gathered over them in dark, impenetrable masses. Even so rested the clouds of doubt, of darkness, and of gloom over the soul of each, and those which were visible to the eye seemed to typify, symbolize, characterize, and body forth the darker clouds that overshadowed the mind.

"*I'm married!*" repeated Dacres, who now seemed to have become like Poe's raven, and all his words one melancholy burden bore.

"You were not married when I was last with you?" said Hawbury at last, in the tone of one who was recovering from a fainting fit.

"Yes, I was."

"Not in South America?"

"Yes, in South America."

"Married?"

"Yes, married."

"By Jove!"

"Yes; and what's more, I've been married for ten years."

"Ten years! Good Lord!"

"It's true."

"Why, how old could you have been when you got married?"

"A miserable, ignorant, inexperienced dolt, idiot, and brat of a boy."

"By Jove!"

"Well, the secret's out; and now, if you care to hear, I will tell you all about it."

"I'm dying to hear, dear boy; so go on."

And at this Scone Dacres began his story.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MAD WIFE.

"I'll tell you all about it," said Scone Dacres; "but don't laugh, for matters like these are not to be trifled with, and I may take offense."

"Oh, bother, as if I ever laugh at any thing serious! By Jove! no. You don't know me, old chap."

"All right, then. Well, to begin. This wife that I speak of happened to me very suddenly. I was only a boy, just out of Oxford, and just into my fortune. I was on my way to Paris—my first visit—and was full of no end of projects for enjoyment. I went from Dover, and in the steamer there was the most infernally pretty girl. Black, mischievous eyes, with the devil's light in them; hair curly, crispy, frisky, luxuriant, all tossing over her head and shoulders, and an awfully enticing manner. A portly old bloke was with her—her father, I afterward learned. Somehow my hat blew off. She laughed. I laughed. Our eyes met. I made a merry remark. She laughed again; and there we were, introduced. She gave me a little felt hat of her own. I fastened it on in triumph with a bit of string, and wore it all the rest of the way.

"Well, you understand it all. Of course, by the time we got to Calais, I was head over heels in love, and so was she, for that matter. The old man was a jolly old John Bull of a man. I don't believe he had the slightest approach to any designs on me. He didn't know any thing about me, so how could he? He was jolly, and when we got to Calais he was convivial. I attached myself to the two, and had a glorious time. Before three days I had exchanged vows of eternal fidelity with the lady, and all that, and had gained her consent to marry me on reaching England. As to the old man there was no trouble at all. He made no inquiries about my means, but wrung my hand heartily, and said God bless me. Besides, there were no friends of my own to consider. My parents were dead, and I had no relations nearer than cousins, for whom I didn't care a pin.

"My wife lived at Exeter, and belonged to rather common people; but, of course, I didn't care for that. Her own manners and style were refined enough. She had been sent by her father to a very fashionable boarding-school, where she had been run through the same mould as that in which her superiors had been formed, and so she might have passed muster any where. Her father was awfully fond of her, and proud of her. She tyrannized over him completely. I soon found out that she had been utterly spoiled by his excessive indulgence, and that she was the most whimsical, nonsensical, headstrong, little spoiled beauty that ever lived. But, of course, all that, instead of deterring me, only increased the fascination which she exercised, and made me more madly in love than ever.

"Her name was not a particularly attractive one; but what are names! It was Arethusa Wiggins. Now the old man always called her "Arry," which sounded like the vulgar pronunciation of "Harry." Of course I couldn't call her that, and Arethusa was too infernally long, for a fellow doesn't want to be all day in pronouncing his wife's name. Besides, it isn't a bad name in itself, of course; it's poetic, classic, and does to name a ship of war, but isn't quite the thing for one's home and hearth.

"After our marriage we spent the honeymoon in Switzerland, and then came home. I had a very nice estate, and have it yet. You've never heard of Dacres Grange, perhaps—well, there's where we began life, and a devil of a life she began to lead me. It was all very well at first. During the honey-moon there were only a few outbursts, and after we came to the Grange she repressed herself for about a fortnight; but finally she broke out in the most furious fashion; and I began to find that she had a devil of a temper, and in her fits she was

but a small remove from a mad woman. You see she had been humored and indulged and petted and coddled by her old fool of a father, until at last she had grown to be the most whimsical, conceited, tetchy, suspicious, imperious, domineering, selfish, cruel, hard-hearted, and malignant young vixen that ever lived; yet this evil nature dwelt in a form as beautiful as ever lived. She was a beautiful demon, and I soon found it out.

"It began out of nothing at all. I had been her adoring slave for three weeks, until I began to be conscious of the most abominable tyranny on her part. I began to resist this, and we were on the verge of an outbreak when we arrived at the Grange. The sight of the old hall appeased her for a time, but finally the novelty wore off, and her evil passions burst out. Naturally enough, my first blind adoration passed away, and I began to take my proper position toward her; that is to say, I undertook to give her some advice, which she very sorely needed. This was the signal for a most furious outbreak. What was worse, her outbreak took place before the servants. Of course I could do nothing under such circumstances, so I left the room. When I saw her again she was sullen and vicious. I attempted a reconciliation, and kneeling down I passed my arms caressingly around her. 'Look here,' said I, 'my own poor little darling, if I've done wrong, I'm sorry, and—'

"Well, what do you think my lady did?"

"I don't know."

"She *kicked me!* that's all; she kicked me, just as I was apologizing to her—just as I was trying to make it up. She kicked me! when I had done nothing, and she alone had been to blame. What's more, her boots were rather heavy, and that kick made itself felt unmistakably.

"I at once arose, and left her without a word. I did not speak to her then for some time. I used to pass her in the house without looking at her. This galled her terribly. She made the house too hot for the servants, and I used to hear her all day long scolding them in a loud shrill voice, till the sound of that voice became horrible to me.

"You must not suppose, however, that I became alienated all at once. That was impossible. I loved her very dearly. After she had kicked me away my love still lasted. It was a galling thought to a man like me that she, a common girl, the daughter of a small tradesman, should have kicked me; me, the descendant of Crusaders, by Jove! and of the best blood in England; but after a while pride gave way to love, and I tried to open the way for a reconciliation once or twice. I attempted to address her in her calmer moods, but it was without any success. She would not answer me at all. If servants were in the room she would at once proceed to give orders to them, just as though I had not spoken. She showed a horrible malignancy in trying to dismiss the older servants, whom she knew to be favorites of mine. Of course I would not let her do it.

"Well, one day I found that this sort of life was intolerable, and I made an effort to put an end to it all. My love was not all gone yet, and I began to think that I had been to blame. She had always been indulged, and I ought to have kept up the system a little longer, and let her down more gradually. I thought of her as I first saw her in the glory of her youthful beauty on the Calais boat, and softened my heart till I began to long for a reconciliation. Really I could not see where I had done any thing out of the way. I was awfully fond of her at first, and would have remained so if she had let me; but, you perceive, her style was not exactly the kind which is best adapted to keep a man at a woman's feet. If she had shown the slightest particle of tenderness, I would have gladly forgiven her all—yes, even the kick, by Jove!

"We had been married about six months or so, and had not spoken for over four months; so on the day I refer to I went to her room. She received me with a sulky expression, and a hard stare full of insult.

"'My dear,' said I, 'I have come to talk seriously with you.'

"'Kate,' said she, 'show this gentleman out.'

"It was her maid to whom she spoke. The maid colored. I turned to her and pointed to the door, and she went out herself. My wife stood trembling with rage—a beautiful fury.

"'I have determined,' said I, quietly, 'to make one last effort for reconciliation, and I want to be heard. Hear me now, dear, dear wife. I want your love again; I can not live this way. Can nothing be done? Must I, must you, always live this way? Have I done any wrong? If I have, I repent. But come, let us forget our quarrel; let us remember the first days of our acquaintance. We loved one another, darling. And how beautiful you were! You are still as beautiful; won't you be as loving? Don't be hard on a fellow, dear. If I've done any wrong, tell me, and I'll make it right. See, we are joined together for life. Can't we make life sweeter for one another than it is now? Come, my wife, be mine again.'

"I went on in this strain for some time, and my own words actually softened me more as I spoke. I felt sorry, too, for my wife, she seemed so wretched. Besides, it was a last chance, and I determined to humble myself. Any thing was better than perpetual hate and misery. So at last I got so affected by my own eloquence that I became quite spooney. Her back was turned to me; I could not see her face. I thought by her silence that she was affected, and, in a gush of tenderness, I put my arm around her.

"In an instant she flung it off, and stepped back, confronting me with a face as hard and an eye as malevolent as a demon.

"She reached out her hand toward the bell.

"'What are you going to do?' I asked.

"'Ring for my maid,' said she.

"'Don't,' said I, getting between her and the bell. 'Think; stop, I implore you. This is our last chance for a reconciliation.'

"She stepped back with a cruel smile. She had a small penknife in her hand. Her eyes glittered venomously.

"'Reconciliation,' she said, with a sneer. 'I don't want it; *I* don't want *you*. *You* came and forced yourself here. Ring for my maid, and I will let her show you the door.'

"'You can't mean it?' I said.

"'I do mean it,' she replied. 'Ring the bell,' she added, imperiously.

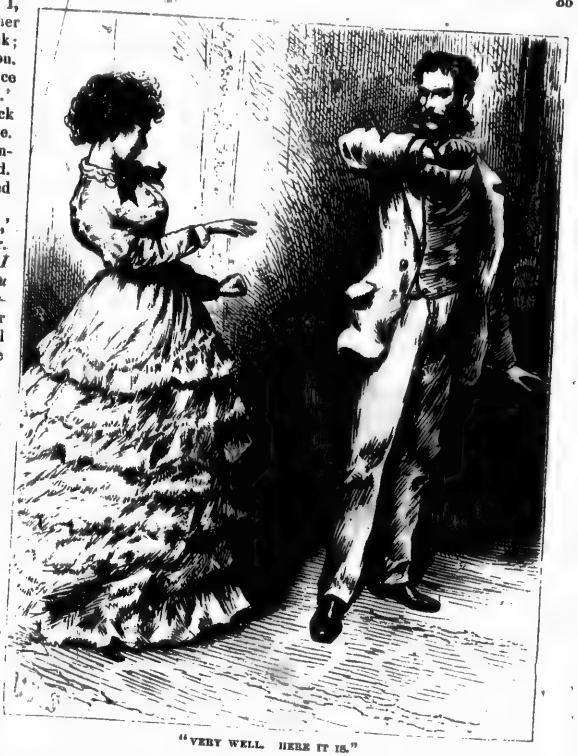
"I stood looking at her.

"'Leave the room, then,' she said.

"'I must have a satisfactory answer,' said I.

"'Very well,' said she. 'Here it is.'

"And saying this she took the penknife by the blade, between her thumb and finger, and slung it at me. It struck me on the arm, and buried itself deep in the flesh till it touched the bone. I drew it out, and without another word left the room. As I went out I heard her summoning the maid in a loud, stern voice.



"VERY WELL. HERE IT IS."

"Well, after that I went to the Continent, and spent about six months. Then I returned.

"On my return I found every thing changed. She had sent off all the servants, and brought there a lot of ruffians whom she was unable to manage, and who threw every thing into confusion. All the gentry talked of her, and avoided the place. My friends greeted me with strange, pitying looks. She had cut down most of the woods, and sold the timber; she had sent off a number of valuable pictures and sold them. This was to get money, for I afterward found out that avarice was one of her strongest vices.

"The sight of all this filled me with indignation, and I at once turned out the whole lot of servants, leaving only two or three maids. I obtained some of the old servants, and reinstated them. All this made my wife quite wild. She came up to me once and began to storm, but I said something to her which shut her up at once.

"One day I came home and found her on the portico, in her riding-habit. She was whipping one of the maids with the butt end of her riding-whip. I rushed up and released the poor creature, whose cries were really heart-rending, when my wife turned on me, like a fury, and struck two blows over my head. One of the scars is on my forehead still. See."

And Dacres put aside his hair on the top of his head, just over his right eye, and showed a long red mark, which seemed like the scar of a dangerous wound.

"It was an ugly blow," he continued. "I at once tore the whip from her, and, grasping her hand, led her into the drawing-room. There I confronted her, holding her tight. I dare say I was rather a queer sight, for the blood was rushing down over my face, and dripping from my beard.

"'Look here, now,' I said; 'do you know any reason why I shouldn't lay this whip over your shoulders? The English law allows it. Don't you feel that you deserve it?'

"She shrank down, pale and trembling. She was a coward, evidently, and accessible to physical terror.

"'If I belonged to your class,' said I, 'I would do it. But I am of a different order. I am a gentleman. Go. After all, I'm not sorry that you gave me this blow.'

"I stalked out of the room, had a doctor, who bound up the wound, and then meditated over my situation. I made up my mind at once to a separation. Thus far she had done nothing to warrant a divorce, and separation was the only thing. I was laid up and feverish for about a month, but at the end of that time I had an interview with my wife. I proposed a separation, and suggested that she should go home to her father. This she refused. She declared herself quite willing to have a separation, but insisted on living at Dacres Grange.

"'And what am I to do?' I asked.

"'Whatever you please,' she replied, calmly.

"'Do you really propose,' said I, 'to drive me out of the home of my ancestors, and live here yourself? Do you think I will allow this place to be under your control after the frightful havoc that you have made?'

"'I shall remain here,' said she, firmly.

"I said nothing more. I saw that she was immovable. At the same time I could not consent. I could not live with her, and I could not go away leaving her there. I could not give up the ancestral home to her, to mar and mangle and destroy. Well, I waited for about two months, and then—"

"Well?" asked Hawbury, as Dacres hesitated.

"Dacres Grange was burned down," said the other, in a low voice.

"Burned down!"

"Yes."

"Good Lord!"

"It caught fire in the daytime. There were but few servants. No fire-engines were near, for the Grange was in a remote place, and so the fire soon gained headway and swept over all. My wife was frantic. She came to me as I stood looking at the spectacle, and charged me with setting fire to it. I smiled at her, but made no reply.

"So you see she was burned out, and that question was settled. It was a terrible thing, but desperate diseases require desperate remedies; and I felt it more tolerable to have the house in ruins than to have her living there while I had to be a wanderer.

"She was now at my mercy. We went to Exeter. She went to her father, and I finally succeeded in effecting an arrangement which was satisfactory on all sides.

"First of all, the separation should be absolute, and neither of us should ever hold communication with the other in any shape or way.

"Secondly, she should take another name, so as to conceal the fact that she was my wife, and not do any further dishonor to the name.

"In return for this I was to give her outright twenty thousand pounds as her own absolutely, to invest or spend just as she chose. She insisted on this, so that she need not be dependent on any annual allowance. In consideration of this she forfeited every other claim, all dower right in the event of my death, and every thing else. This was all drawn up in a formal document, and worded as carefully as possible. I don't believe that the document would be of much use in a court of law in case she wished to claim any of her rights, but it served to satisfy her, and she thought it was legally sound and actually inviolable.

"Here we separated. I left England, and have never been there since."

Dacres stopped, and sat silent for a long time.

"Could she have been mad?" asked Hawbury.

"I used to think so, but I believe not. She showed too much sense in every thing relating to herself. She sold pictures and timber, and kept every penny. She was acute enough in grasping all she could. During our last interviews while making these arrangements she was perfectly cool and lady-like.

"Have you ever heard about her since?"

"Never."

"Is she alive yet?"

"That's the bother."

"What! don't you know?"

"No."

"Haven't you ever tried to find out?"

"Yes. Two years ago I went and had inquiries made at Exeter. Nothing could be found out. She and her father had left the place immediately after my departure, and nothing was known about them."

"I wonder that you didn't go yourself?"

"What for? I didn't care about seeing her or finding her."

"Do you think she's alive yet?"

"I'm afraid she is. You see she always had excellent health, and there's no reason why she should not live to be an octogenarian."

"Yet she may be dead."

"*May* be! And what sort of comfort is that to me in my present position, I should like to know? *May* be? Is that a sufficient foundation for me to build on? No. In a moment of thoughtlessness I have allowed myself to forget the horrible position in which I am. But now I recall it. I'll crush down my feelings, and be a man again. I'll see the child-angel once more; once more feast my soul over her sweet and exquisite loveliness; once more get a glance from her tender, innocent, and guileless eyes, and then away to South America."

"You said your wife took another name."

"Yes."

"What was it? Do you know it?"

"Oh yes; it was *Willoughby*."

"*Willoughby!*" cried Hawbury, with a start; "why, that's the name of my Ethel's friend, at Montreal. Could it have been the same?"

"Pooh, man! How is that possible? Willoughby is not an uncommon name. It's not more likely that your Willoughby and mine are the same than it is that your Ethel is the one I

met at Vesuvius. It's only a coincidence, and not a very wonderful one, either."

"It seems con-foundedly odd, too," said Hawbury, thoughtfully. "Willoughby? Ethel? Good Lord! But pooh! What rot? As though they *could* be the same. Preposterous! By Jove!"

And Hawbury stroked away the preposterous idea through his long, pendent whi[illegible]

"SHE CAUGHT MINNIE IN HER ARMS."

CHAPTER IX.

NEW EMBARRASSMENTS.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY had been spending a few days with a friend whom she had found in Naples, and on her return was greatly shocked to hear of Minnie's adventure on Vesuvius. Lady Dalrymple and Ethel had a story to tell which needed no exaggerations and amplifications to agitate her strongly. Minnie was not present during the recital; so, after hearing it, Mrs. Willoughby went to her room.

Here she caught Minnie in her arms, and kissed her in a very effusive manner.

"Oh, Minnie, my poor darling, what is all this about Vesuvius? Is it true? It is terrible. And now I will never dare to leave you again. How could I think that you would be in any danger with Lady Dalrymple and Ethel? As to Ethel, I am astonished. She is always so grave and so sad that she is the very last person I would have supposed capable of leading you into danger."

"Now, Kitty dearest, that's not true," said Minnie; "she didn't lead me at all. I led her. And how did I know there was any danger? I remember now that dear, darling Ethel said there was, and I didn't believe her. But it's always the way." And Minnie threw her little head on one side, and gave a resigned sigh.

"And did you really get into the crater?" asked Mrs. Willoughby, with a shudder.

"Oh, I suppose so. They all said so," said Minnie, folding her little hands in front of her.

"I only remember some smoke, and then jolting about dreadfully on the shoulder of some great—big—awful—man."

"Oh dear!" sighed Mrs. Willoughby.

"What's the matter, Kitty dearest?"

"Another man!" groaned her sister.

"Well, and how *could* I help it?" said Minnie. "I'm *sure* I didn't want him. I'm *sure* I think he might have let me alone. I don't see *why* they all act so. I *wish* they wouldn't be all the time coming and saving my life. If people *will* go and save my life, I can't help it. I think it's very, very horrid of them."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" sighed her sister again.

"Now, Kitty, stop."

"Another man!" sighed Mrs. Willoughby.

"Now, Kitty, if you are so unkind, I'll cry. You're *always* teasing me. You *never* do anything to comfort me. You *know* I want comfort, and I'm not strong, and people all come and save my life and worry me; and I really sometimes think I'd rather not live at all if my life *has* to be saved so often. I'm sure *I* don't know why they go and do it. I'm sure *I* never heard of any person who is always going and getting her life saved, and bothered, and proposed to, and written to, and chased, and frightened to death. And I've a *great* mind to go and get married, just to stop it all. And I'd *just* as soon marry this last man as not, and make him drive all the others away from me. He's big enough."

Minnie ended all this with a little sob; and her sister, as usual, did her best to soothe and quiet her.

"Well, but, darling, how did it all happen?"

"Oh, don't, don't."

"But you might tell *me*."

"Oh, I can't bear to think of it. It's too horrible."

"Poor darling—the crater?"

"No, the great, big man. I didn't see any crater."

"Weren't you in the crater?"

"No, I wasn't."

"They said you were."

"I wasn't. I was on the back of a big, horrid man, who gave great jumps down the side of an awful mountain, all sand and things, and threw me down at the bottom of it, and—and—disarranged all my hair. And I was so frightened that I couldn't even cur—cur—cry." Here Minnie sobbed afresh, and Mrs. Willoughby petted her again.

"And you shouldn't tease me so; and it's very unkind in you; and you know I'm not well; and I can't bear to think about it all; and I know you're going to scold me; and you're *always* scolding me; and you *never* do what I want you to. And then people are *always* coming and saving my life, and I can't bear it any more."

"No-o-o-o-o-o, no-o-o-o-o-o, darling!" said Mrs. Willoughby, soothingly, in the tone of a nurse appeasing a fretful child. "You sha'n't bear it any more."

"I don't *want* them to save me any more."

"Well, they sha'n't *do* it, then," said Mrs. Willoughby, affectionately, in a somewhat maudlin tone.

"And the next time I lose my life, I don't want to be saved. I want them to let me alone, and I'll come home myself."

"And so you shall, darling; you shall do just as you please. So, now, cheer up; don't cry;" and Mrs. Willoughby tried to wipe Minnie's eyes.

"But you're treating me just like a baby, and I don't want to be talked to so," said Minnie, fretfully.

Mrs. Willoughby retreated with a look of despair.

"Well, then, dear, I'll do just whatever you want me to do."

"Well, then, I want you to tell me what I am to do."

"About what?"

"Why, about this great, big, horrid man."

"I thought you didn't want me to talk about this any more."

"But I *do* want you to talk about it. You're the only person that I've got to talk to about it; nobody else knows how peculiarly I'm situated; and I didn't think that you'd give me up because I had fresh troubles."

"Give you up, darling!" echoed her sister, in surprise.

"You said you wouldn't talk about it any more."

"But I thought you didn't want me to talk about it."

"But I *do* want you to."

"Very well, then; and now I want you first of all, darling, to tell me how you happened to get into such danger."

"Well, you know," began Minnie, who now seemed calmer—"you know we all went out for a drive. And we drove along for miles. Such a drive! There were lazaroni, and donkeys, and calèches with as many as twenty in each, all pulled by one poor horse, and it's a great shame; and pigs—oh, *such* pigs! Not a particle of hair on them, you know, and looking like young elephants, you know; and we saw great droves of oxen, and long lines of booths no end; and people selling macaroni, and other people eating it right in the open street, you know—such fun!—and fishermen and fish-wives. Oh, how they *were* screaming, and oh, *such* a hubbub as there was! and we couldn't go on fast, and Dowdy seemed really frightened."

"Dowdy?" repeated Mrs. Willoughby, in an interrogative tone.

"Oh, that's a name I've just invented for Lady Dalrymple. It's better than Rymple. She said so. It's Dowager shortened. She's a dowager, you know. And so, you know, I was on the front seat all the time, when all at once I saw a gentleman on horseback. He was a great big man—oh, *so* handsome!—and he was looking at poor little me as though he would eat me up. And the moment I saw him I was frightened out of my poor little wits, for I knew he was coming to save my life."

"You poor little puss! what put such an idea as that into your ridiculous little head?"

"Oh, I knew it—second-sight, you know. We've got Scotch blood, Kitty darling, you know. So, you know, I sat, and I saw that he was pretending not to see me, and not to be following us; but all the time he was taking good care to keep behind us, when he could easily have passed us, and all to get a good look at poor me, you know.

"Well," continued Minnie, drawing a long breath, "you know I was awfully frightened; and so I sat looking at him, and I whispered all the time to myself: 'Oh, please don't!—ple-e-e-e-e-ease don't! Don't come and save my life! Ple-e-e-e-e-ease let me alone! I don't want to be saved at all.' I said this, you know, all to myself, and the more I said it the more he seemed to fix his eyes on me."

"It was very, very rude in him, *I* think," said Mrs. Willoughby, with some indignation.

"No, it wasn't," said Minnie, sharply. "He wasn't rude at all. He tried not to look at me. He pretended to be looking at the sea, and at the pigs, and all that sort of thing, you know; but all the time, you know, I knew very well that he saw me out of the corner of his eye—this way."

And Minnie half turned her head, and threw upon her sister, out of the corner of her eyes, a glance so languishing that the other laughed.

"He didn't look at you that way, I hope?"

"There was nothing to laugh at in it at all," said Minnie. "He had an awfully solemn look—it was so earnest, so sad, and so dreadful, that I really began to feel quite frightened. And so would *you*; wouldn't *you*, now, Kitty darling; now *wouldn't* you? Please say so."

"Oh yes!"

"Of course you would. Well, this person followed us. I could see him very easily, though he tried to avoid notice; and so at last we got to the Hermitage, and he came too. Well, you know, I think I was very much excited, and I asked Dowdy to let us go and see the cone; so she let us go. She gave no end of warnings, and we promised to do all that she said. So Ethel and I went out, and there was the stranger. Well, I felt more excited than ever, and a little bit frightened—just a very, very, tiny, little bit, you know, and I teased Ethel to go to the cone. Well, the stranger kept in sight all the time, you know, and I *felt* his eyes on me—I really *felt* them. So, you know, when we got at the foot of the cone, I was so excited that I was really quite beside myself, and I teased and teased, till at last Ethel consented to go up. So the men took us up on chairs, and all the time the stranger was in sight. He walked up by himself with great, big, long, strong strides. So we went on till we got at the top, and then I was wilder than ever. I didn't know that there

was a particle of danger. I was dying with curiosity to look down, and see where the smoke came from. The stranger was standing there too, and that's what made me so excited. I wanted to show him—I don't know what. I think my idea was to show him that I could take care of myself. So then I teased and teased, and Ethel begged and prayed, and she cried, and I laughed; and there stood the stranger, seeing it all, until at last I started off, and ran up to the top, you know."

Mrs. Willoughby shuddered, and took her sister's hand.

"There was no end of smoke, you know, and it was awfully unpleasant, and I got to the top I don't know how, when suddenly I fainted."

Minnie paused for a moment, and looked at her sister with a rueful face.

"Well, now, dear, darling, the very—next—thing—that I remember is this, and it's horrid: I felt awful jolts, and found myself in the arms of a great, big, horrid man, who was running down the side of the mountain with dreadfully long jumps, and I felt as though he was some horrid ogre carrying poor me away to his den to eat me up. But I didn't say one word. I wasn't much frightened. I felt provoked. I knew it was that horrid man. And then I wondered what you'd say; and I thought, oh, how you *would* scold! And then I knew that this horrid man would chase me away from Italy; and then I would have to go to Turkey, and have my life saved by a Mohammedan. And that was horrid.

"Well, at last he stopped and laid me down. He was very gentle, though he was so big. I kept my eyes shut, and lay as still as a mouse, hoping that Ethel would come. But Ethel didn't. She was coming down with the chair, you know, and her men couldn't run like mine. And oh, Kitty darling, you have no *idea* what I suffered. This horrid man was rubbing and pounding at my hands, and sighing and groaning. I stole a little bit of a look at him—just a little bit of a bit—and saw tears in his eyes, and a wild look of fear in his face. Then I knew that he was going to propose to me on the spot, and kept my eyes shut tighter than ever.

"Well, at last he hurt my hands so that I thought I'd try to make him stop. So I spoke as low as I could, and asked if I was home, and he said yes."

Minnie paused.

"Well?" asked her sister.

"Well," said Minnie, in a doleful tone, "I then asked, 'Is that you, papa dear?'"

Minnie stopped again.

"Well?" asked Mrs. Willoughby once more, "Well—"

"Well, go on."

"Well, he said—he said, Yes, darling'—and—"

"And what?"

"And he kissed me," said Minnie, in a doleful voice.

"Kissed you!" exclaimed her sister, with flashing eyes.

"Ye-yes," stammered Minnie, with a sob; "and I think it's a shame; and none of them ever did so before; and I don't want you ever to go away again, Kitty darling."

"The miserable wretch!" cried Mrs. Willoughby, indignantly.

"No, he isn't—he isn't that," said Minnie. "He isn't a miserable wretch at all."

"How could any one be so base who pretends to the name of gentleman!" cried Mrs. Willoughby.

"He wasn't base—and it's very wicked of you, Kitty. He only pretended, you know."

"Pretended!"

"Yes."

"Pretended what?"

"Why, that he was my—my father, you know."

"Does Ethel know this?" asked Mrs. Willoughby, after a curious look at Minnie.

"No, of course not, nor Dowdy either; and you mustn't go and make any disturbance."

"Disturbance? no; but if I ever see him, I'll let him know what I think of him," said Mrs. Willoughby, severely.

"But he saved my life, and so you know you can't be *very* harsh with him. Please don't—ple-e-e-ease now, Kitty darling."

"Oh, you little goose, what whimsical idea have you got now?"

"Please don't, ple-e-e-ease don't," repeated Minnie.

"Oh, never mind; go on now, darling, and tell me about the rest of it."

"Well, there isn't any more. I lay still, you know, and at last Ethel came; and then we went back to Dowdy, and then we came home, you know."

"Well, I hope you've lost him."

"Lost him? Oh no; I never do. They always *will* come. Besides, this one will, I know."

"Why?"

"Because he said so."

"Said so? when?"

"Yesterday."

"Yesterday?"

"Yes; we met him."

"Who?"

"Dowdy and I. We were out driving. We stopped and spoke to him. He was dreadfully earnest and awfully embarrassed; and I knew he was going to propose; so I kept whispering to myself all the time, 'Oh, please don't—please don't;' but I know he will; and he'll be here soon too."

"He sha'n't. I won't let him. I'll never give him the chance."

"I think you needn't be so cruel."

"Cruel!"

"Yes; to the poor man."

"Why, you don't want another man, I hope?"

"N-no; but then I don't want to hurt his feelings. It was awfully good of him, you know, and *awfully* plucky."

"IF I EVER SEE HIM, I'LL LET HIM KNOW WHAT I THINK OF HIM."

"Well, I should think that you would prefer avoiding him, in your peculiar situation."

"Yes, but he may feel hurt."

"Oh, he may see you once or twice with me."

"But he may want to see me alone, and what *can* I do?"

"Really now, Minnie, you must remember that you are in a serious position. There is that wretched Captain Kirby."

"I know," said Minnie, with a sigh.

"And that dreadful American. By-the-way, darling, you have never told me his name. It isn't of any consequence, but I should like to know the American's name."

"It's—Rufus K. Gunn."

"Rufus K. Gunn; what a funny name! and what in the world is 'K' for?"

"Oh, nothing. He says it is the fashion in his country to have some letter of the alphabet between one's names, and he chose 'K,' because it was so awfully uncommon. Isn't it funny, Kitty darling?"

"Oh dear!" sighed her sister; "and then there is that pertinacious Count Girasole. Think what trouble we had in getting quietly rid of him. I'm afraid all the time that he will not stay at Florence, as he said, for he seems to have no fixed abode. First he was going to Rome, and then Venice, and at last he committed himself to a statement that he had to remain at Florence, and so enabled us to get rid of him. But I know he'll come upon us again somewhere, and then we'll have all the trouble over again. Oh dear! Well, Minnie darling, do you know the name of this last one?"

"Oh yes."

"What is it?"

"It's a funny name," said Minnie; "a very funny name."

"Tell it to me."

"It's Scone Dacres; and isn't that a funny name?"

Mrs. Willoughby started at the mention of that name. Then she turned away her head, and did not say a word for a long time.

"Kitty!"

No answer.

"Kitty darling, what's the matter?"

Mrs. Willoughby turned her head once more. Her face was quite calm, and her voice had its usual tone, as she asked,

"Say that name again."

"Scone Dacres," said Minnie.

"Scone Dacres!" repeated Mrs. Willoughby; "and what sort of a man is he?"

"Big—very big—awfully big!" said Minnie. "Great, big head and broad shoulders. Great, big arms, that carried me as if I were a feather; big beard too; and it tickled me so when he—he pretended that he was my father; and very sad. And, oh! I know I should be so awfully fond of him. And, oh! Kitty darling, what do you think?"

"What, dearest?"

"Why, I'm—I'm afraid—I'm really beginning to—to—like him—just a little tiny bit, you know."

"Scone Dacres!" repeated Mrs. Willough-

by, who didn't seem to have heard this last effusion. "Scone Dacres! Well, darling, don't trouble yourself; he sha'n't trouble you."

"But I *want* him to," said Minnie.

"Oh, nonsense, child!"

"HALLO, OLD MAN, WHAT'S UP NOW?"

CHAPTER X.

A FEARFUL DISCOVERY.

A FEW days after this Hawbury was in his room, when Dacres entered.

"Hallo, old man, what's up now? How goes the war?" said Hawbury. "But what the mischief's the matter? You look cut up. Your brow is sad; your eyes beneath flash like a falchion from its sheath. What's happened? You look half snubbed, and half desperate."

Dacres said not a word, but flung himself into a chair with a look that suited Hawbury's description of him quite accurately. His brows lowered into a heavy frown, his lips were compressed, and his breath came quick and hard through his inflated nostrils. He sat thus for some time without taking any notice whatever of his friend, and at length lighted a cigar, which he smoked, as he often did when excited, in great voluminous puffs. Hawbury said nothing, but after one or two quick glances at his friend, rang a bell and ordered some "Bass."

"Here, old fellow," said he, drawing the attention of Dacres to the refreshing draught. "Take some—'Quaff, oh, quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget thy lost Lenore.'"

Dacres at this gave a heavy sigh that sounded like a groan, and swallowed several tumblers in quick succession.

"Hawbury!" said he at length, in a half-stifled voice.

"Well, old man?"

"I've had a blow to-day full on the breast that fairly staggered me."

"By Jove!"

"Fact, I've just come from a mad ride along the shore. I've been mad, I think, for two or three hours. Of all the monstrous, abominable, infernal, and unheard-of catastrophes this is the worst."

He stopped, and puffed away desperately at his cigar.

"Don't keep a fellow in suspense this way," said Hawbury, at last. "What's up? Out with it, man."

"Well, you know, yesterday I called there."

Hawbury nodded.

"She was not at home."

"So you said."

"You know she really wasn't, for I told you that I met their carriage. The whole party were in it, and on the front seat beside Minnie there was another lady. This is the one that I had not seen before. She makes the fourth in that party. She and Minnie had their backs turned as they came up. The other ladies bowed as they passed, and as I held off my hat I half turned to catch Minnie's eyes, when I caught sight of the face of the lady. It startled me so much that I was thunder-struck, and stood there with my hat off after they had passed me for some time."

"You said nothing about that, old chap. Who the deuce could she have been?"

"No, I said nothing about it. As I cantered off I began to think that it was only a fancy of mine, and finally I was sure of it, and laughed it off. For, you must know, the lady's face looked astonishingly like a certain face that I don't particularly care to see—certainly not in such close connection with Minnie. But, you see, I thought it might have been my fancy, so that I finally shook off the feeling, and said nothing to you about it."

Dacres paused here, rubbed his hand violently over his hair at the place where the scar was, and then, frowning heavily, resumed:

"Well, this afternoon I called again. They were at home. On entering I found three ladies there. One was Lady Dalrymple, and the others were Minnie and her friend Ethel—either her friend or her sister. I think she's her sister. Well, I sat for about five minutes, and was just beginning to feel the full sense of my happiness, when the door opened and another lady entered. Hawbury"—and Dacres's tones deepened into an awful solemnity—"Hawbury, it was the lady that I saw in the carriage yesterday. One look at her was enough. I was assured then that my impressions yesterday were not dreams, but the damnable and abhorrent truth!"

"What impressions—you haven't told me yet, you know?"

"Wait a minute. I rose as she entered, and

"I STOOD TRANSFIXED."

confronted her. She looked at me calmly, and then stood as though expecting to be introduced. There was no emotion visible whatever. She was prepared for it: I was not: and so she was as cool as when I saw her last, and, what is more, just as young and beautiful."

"The devil!" cried Hawbury.

Dacres poured out another glass of ale and drank it. His hand trembled slightly as he put down the glass, and he sat for some time in thought before he went on.

"Well, Lady Dalrymple introduced us. It was Mrs. Willoughby!"

"By Jove!" cried Hawbury. "I saw you were coming to that."

"Well, you know, the whole thing was so sudden, so unexpected, and so perfectly overwhelming, that I stood transfixed. I said nothing. I believe I bowed, and then somehow or other, I really don't know how, I got away, and, mounting my horse, rode off like a madman. Then I came home, and here you see me."

There was a silence now for some time.

"Are you sure that it was your wife?"

"Of course I am. How could I be mistaken?"

"Are you sure the name was Willoughby?"

"Perfectly sure."

"And that is the name your wife took?"

"Yes; I told you so before, didn't I?"

"Yes. But think now. Mightn't there be some mistake?"

"Pooh! how could there be any mistake?"

"Didn't you see any change in her?"

"No, only that she looked much more quiet than she used to. Not so active, you know. In her best days she was always excitable, and a little demonstrative; but now she seems to have sobered down, and is as quiet and well-bred as any of the others."

"Was there not any change in her at all?"

"Not so much as I would have supposed; certainly not so much as there is in me. But then I've been knocking about all over the world, and she's been living a life of peace and calm, with the sweet consciousness of having triumphed over a hated husband, and possessing a handsome competency. Now she mingles in the best society. She associates with

lords and ladies. She enjoys life in England, while I am an exile. No doubt she passes for a fine young widow. No doubt, too, she has lots of admirers. They aspire to her hand. They write poetry to her. They make love to her. Confound her!"

Dacres's voice grew more and more agitated and excited as he spoke, and at length his tirade against his wife ended in something that was almost a roar.

Hawbury said nothing, but listened, with his face full of sympathy. At last his pent-up feeling found expression in his favorite exclamation, "By Jove!"

"Wouldn't I be justified in wringing her neck?" asked Dacres, after a pause. "And what's worse," he continued, without waiting for an answer to his question—"what's worse, her presence here in this unexpected way has given me, *me*, mind you, a sense of guilt, while she is, of course, immaculate. *I*, mind you—*I*, the injured husband, with the scar on my head from a wound made by *her* hand, and all the ghosts of my ancestors howling curses over me at night for my desolated and ruined home—*I* am to be conscience-stricken in her presence, as if I were a felon, while *she*, the really guilty one—the blight and bitter destruction of my life—*she* is to appear before me now as injured, and must make her appearance here, standing by the side of that sweet child-angel, and warning me away. Confound it all, man! Do you mean to say that such a thing is to be borne?"

Dacres was now quite frantic; so Hawbury, with a sigh of perplexity, lighted a fresh cigar, and thus took refuge from the helplessness of his position. It was clearly a state of things in which advice was utterly useless, and consolation impossible. What could he advise, or what consolation could he offer? The child-angel was now out of his friend's reach, and the worst fears of the lover were more than realized.

"I told you I was afraid of this," continued Dacres. "I had a suspicion that she was alive, and I firmly believe she'll outlive me forty years; but I must say I never expected to see her in this way, under such circumstances. And then to find her so infernally beautiful! Confound her! she don't look over twenty-five. How the mischief does she manage it? Oh, she's a deep one! But perhaps she's changed. She seems so calm, and came into the room so gently, and looked at me so steadily. Not a tremor, not a shake, as I live. Calm, Sir; cool as steel, and hard too. She looked away, and then looked back. They were searching glances, too, as though they read me through and through. Well, there was no occasion for that. She ought to know Scone Dacres well enough, I swear. Cool! And there stood I, with the blood flashing to my head, and throbbing fire underneath the scar of her wound—hers—her own property, for she made it! That was the woman that kicked me, that struck at me, that caused the destruction of my ancestral house, that drove me to exile, and that now drives me back from my love. But, by Heaven! it 'll take more than her to do it; and I'll show her again, as I showed her once before, that Scone Dacres is her master. And, by Jove! she'll find that it 'll take more than herself to keep me away from Minnie Fay."

"See here, old boy," said Hawbury, "you may as well throw up the sponge."

"I won't," said Dacres, gruffly.

"You see it isn't your wife that you have to consider, but the girl; and do you think the girl or her friends would have a married man paying his attentions in that quarter? Would you have the face to do it under your own wife's eye? By Jove!"

The undeniable truth of this assertion was felt by Dacres even in his rage. But the very fact that it was unanswerable, and that he was helpless, only served to deepen and intensify his rage. Yet he said nothing; it was only in his face and manner that his rage was manifested. He appeared almost to suffocate under the rush of fierce, contending passions; big distended veins swelled out in his forehead, which was also drawn far down in a gloomy frown; his breath came thick and fast, and his hands were clenched tight together. Hawbury watched him in silence as before, feeling all the time the impossibility of saying any thing that could be of any use whatever.

"Well, old fellow," said Dacres at last, giving a long breath, in which he seemed to throw off some of his excitement, "you're right, of course, and I am helpless. There's no chance for me. Paying attentions is out of the question, and the only thing for me to do is to give up the whole thing. But that isn't to be done at once. It's been long since I've seen any one for whom I felt any tenderness, and this little thing, I know, is fond of me. I can't quit her at once. I must stay on for a time, at least, and have occasional glimpses at her. It gives me a fresh sense of almost heavenly sweetness to look at her fair young face. Besides, I feel that I am far more to her than any other man. No other man has stood to her in the relation in which I have stood. Recollect how I saved her from death. That is no light thing. She must feel toward me as she has never felt to any other. She is not one who can forget how I snatched her from a fearful death, and brought her back to life. Every time she looks at me she seems to convey all that to me in her glance."

"Oh, well, my dear fellow, really now," said Hawbury, "just think. You can't do any thing."

"But I don't want to do any thing."

"It never can end in any thing, you know."

"But I don't want it to end in any thing."

"You'll only bother her by entangling her affections."

"But I don't want to entangle her affections."

"Then what the mischief *do* you want to do?"

"Why, very little. I'll start off soon for the uttermost ends of the earth, but I wish to stay a little longer and see her sweet face. It's not much, is it? It won't compromise her, will it? She need not run any risk, need she? And I'm a man of honor, am I not? You don't suppose me to be capable of any baseness, do you?"

"My dear fellow, how absurd! Of course not. Only I was afraid by giving way to this sentimental drift on into a worse state of mind. She's all safe. I fancy, surrounded as she is by so many admirers. It is you that I'm anxious about.

"Don't be alarmed, old chap, about me. I feel calm already. I can face my situation firmly, and prepare for the worst. While I have been sitting here I have thought out the future. I will stay here four or five weeks. I will only seek solace for myself by riding about where I may meet her. I do not intend to go to the house at all. My demon of a wife may have the whole house to herself. I won't even give her the pleasure of supposing that she has thwarted me. She shall never even suspect the state of my heart. That would be bliss indeed to one like her, for then she would find herself able to put me on the rack. No, my boy; I've thought it all over. Scone Dacres is himself again. No more nonsense now. Do you understand now what I mean?"

"Yes," said Hawbury, slowly, and in his worst drawl; "but ah, really, don't you think it's all nonsense?"

"What?"

"Why, this ducking and diving about to get a glimpse of her face."

"I don't intend to duck and dive about. I merely intend to ride like any other gentleman. What put that into your head, man?"

"Well, I don't know; I gathered it from the way you expressed yourself."

"Well, I don't intend any thing of the kind. I simply wish to have occasional looks at her—to get a bow and a smile of recognition when I meet her, and have a few additional recollections to turn over in my thoughts after I have left her forever. Perhaps this seems odd."

"Oh no, it [illegible]. I quite understand it. A passing smile [illegible] parting sigh is sometimes more precious [illegible] any other memory. I know all about it, you know—looks, glances, smiles, sighs, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Well, now, old chap, there's one thing I want you to do for me."

"Well, what is it?"

"It isn't much, old fellow. It isn't much. I simply wish you to visit there."

"*Me?*—visit *there?* What! me—and visit? Why, my dear fellow, don't you know how I hate such bother?"

"I know all about that; but, old boy, it's only for a few weeks I ask it, and for my sake, as a particular favor. I look it in that light."

"Oh, well, really, dear boy, if you put it in that light, you know, of course, that I'll do any thing, even if it comes to letting myself be bored to death."

"Just a visit a day or so."

"A visit a day!" Hawbury looked aghast.

"It isn't much to ask, you know," continued Dacres. "You see my reason is this: I can't go there myself, as you see, and I hunger to hear about her. I should like to hear how she looks, and what she says, and whether she thinks of me."

"Oh, come now! look here, my dear fellow, you're putting it a little too strong. You don't expect me to go there and talk to her about you, you know. Why, man alive, that's quite out of my way. I'm not much of a talker at any time; and besides, you know, there's something distasteful in acting as—as— By Jove! I don't know what to call it."

"My dear boy, you don't understand me. Do you think I'm a sneak? Do you suppose I'd ask you to act as a go-between? Nonsense! I merely ask you to go as a cursory visitor. I don't want you to breathe my name, or even think of me while you are there."

"But suppose I make myself too agreeable to the young lady. By Jove! she might think I was paying her attentions, you know."

"Oh no, no! believe me, you don't know her. She's too earnest; she has too much soul to shift and change. Oh no! I feel that she is mine, and that the image of my own miserable self is indelibly impressed upon her heart. Oh no! you don't know her. If you had heard her thrilling expressions of gratitude, if you had seen the beseeching and pleading looks which she gave me, you would know that she is one of those natures who love once, and once only."

"Oh, by Jove, now! Come! If that's the state of the case, why, I'll go."

"Thanks, old boy."

"As a simple visitor."

"Yes—that's all."

"To talk about the weather, and that rot."

"Yes."

"And no[illegible]

"No."

"Not a w[illegible]t you."

"[illegible] questions, and that sort of thing."

"Nothing of the kind."

"No hint of watching, but just as if I went there of my own accord."

"That's exactly the thing."

"Very well, now, pray, what good is all this going to do you, my boy?"

"Well, just this; I can talk to you about her every evening, and you can tell me how she looks, and what she says, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"By Jove!"

"And you'll cheer my heart, old fellow."

"Heavens and earth! old boy, you don't seem to think that this is going to be no end of a bore."

"I know it, old man; but then, you know, I'm desperate just now."

"By Jove!"

And Hawbury, uttering this exclamation, relapsed into silence, and wondered over his friend's infatuation.

On the following day when Dacres came in he found that Hawbury had kept his word.

"Great bore, old fellow," said he; "but I did it. The old lady is an old acquaintance, you know. I'm going there to-morrow again. Didn't see any thing to-day of the child-angel. But it's no end of a bore, you know."

"'IT'S HE!' SHE MURMURED."

CHAPTER XI.

FALSE AND FORGETFUL.

The day when Lord Hawbury called on Lady Dalrymple was a very eventful one in his life, and had it not been for a slight peculiarity of his, the immediate result of that visit would have been of a highly important character. This slight peculiarity consisted in the fact that he was short-sighted. He therefore, on a very critical occasion, saw every thing differently from that which would have been his [illegible] although it was full before his gaze.

It happened in this wise.

On the day when Hawbury called, Ethel happened to be sitting by the window, and saw him as he rode up. Now the last time that she had seen him he had a very different appearance—all his hair being burned off, from head and cheeks and chin; and the whiskers which he had when she first met him had been of a different cut from the present appendages. In spite of this she recognized him almost in a moment; and her heart beat fast, and her color came and went, and her hands clutched the window ledge convulsively.

"*It's he!*" she murmured.

Of course there was only one idea in her mind, and that was that he had heard of her presence in Naples, and had come to call on her.

She sat there without motion, with her head eagerly bent forward, and her eyes fixed upon him. He looked up carelessly as he came along, and with his chin in the air, in a fashion peculiar to him, which, by-the-way, gave a quite unintentional superciliousness to his expression. For an instant his eyes rested upon her, then they moved away, without the slightest recognition, and wandered elsewhere.

Ethel's heart seemed turned to stone. He had seen her. He had not noticed her. He had fixed his eyes on her and then looked away. Bitter, indeed, was all this to her. To think that after so long a period of waiting—after such hope and watching as hers had been—that this should be the end. She turned away from the window, with a choking sensation in her throat. No one was in the room. She was alone with her thoughts and her tears.

Suddenly her mood changed. A thought came to her which dispelled her gloom. The glance that he had given was too hasty; perhaps he really had not fairly looked at her. No doubt he had come for her, and she would shortly be summoned down.

And now this prospect brought new hope. Light returned to her eyes, and joy to her heart. Yes, she would be summoned. She must prepare herself to encounter his eager gaze. Quickly she stepped to the mirror, hastily she arranged those little details in which consists the charm of a lady's dress, and severely she scrutinized the face and figure reflected there. The scrutiny was a satisfactory one. Face and figure were perfect; nor was there in the world any thing more graceful and more lovely than the image there, though the one who looked upon it was far too self-distrustful to entertain any such idea as that.

Then she seated herself and waited. The time moved slowly, indeed, as she waited there. After a few minutes she found it impossible to sit any longer. She walked to the door, held it open, and listened. She heard his voice below quite plainly. They had two suits of rooms in the house—the bedrooms up stairs and reception-rooms below. Here Lord Hawbury was, now, within hearing of Ethel. Well she knew that voice. She listened and frowned. The tone was too flippant. He talked like a man without a care—like a butterfly of society

—and that was a class which she scorned. Here he was, keeping her waiting. Here he was, keeping up a hateful clatter of small-talk, while her heart was aching with suspense.

Ethel stood there listening. Minute succeeded to minute. There was no request for her. How strong was the contrast between the cool indifference of the man below, and the feverish impatience of that listener above! A wild impulse came to her to go down, under the pretense of looking for something; then another to go down and out for a walk, so that he might see her. But in either case pride held her back. How could she? Had he not already seen her? Must he not know perfectly well that she was there? No; if he did not call for her she could not go. She could not make advances.

Minute succeeded to minute, and Ethel stood burning with impatience, racked with suspense, a prey to the bitterest feelings. Still no message. Why did he delay? Her heart ached now worse than ever, the choking feeling in her throat returned, and her eyes grew moist. She steadied herself by holding to the door. Her fingers grew white at the tightness of her grasp; eyes and ears were strained in their intent watchfulness over the room below.

Of course the caller below was in a perfect state of ignorance about all this. He had not the remotest idea of that one who now stood so near. He came as a martyr. He came to make a call. It was a thing he detested. It bored him. To a man like him the one thing to be avoided on earth was a bore. To be bored was to his mind the uttermost depth of misfortune. This he had voluntarily accepted. He was being bored, and bored to death.

Certainly no man ever accepted a calamity more gracefully than Hawbury. He was charming, affable, easy, chatty. Of course he was known to Lady Dalrymple. The Dowager could make herself as agreeable as any lady living, except young and beautiful ones. The conversation, therefore, was easy and flowing. Hawbury excelled in this.

Now there are several variations in the great art of expression, and each of these is a minor art by itself. Among these may be enumerated:

First, of course, the art of novel-writing.

Second, the art of writing editorials.

Third, the art of writing paragraphs.

After these come all the arts of oratory, letter-writing, essay-writing, and all that sort of thing, among which there is one to which I wish particularly to call attention, and this is:

The art of small-talk.

Now this art Hawbury had to an extraordinary degree of perfection. He knew how to beat out the faintest shred of an idea into an illimitable surface of small-talk. He never took refuge in the weather. He left that to bunglers and beginners. His resources were of a different character, and were so skillfully managed that he never failed to leave a very agreeable impression. Small-talk! Why, I've been in situations sometimes where I would have given the power of writing like Dickens (if I had it) for perfection in this last art.

But this careless, easy, limpid, smooth, natural, pleasant, and agreeable flow of chat was nothing but gall and wormwood to the listener above. She ought to be there. Why was she so slighted? Could it be possible that he would go away without seeing her?

She was soon to know.

She heard him rise. She heard him saunter to the door.

"Thanks, yes. Ha, ha, you're too kind—really—yes—very happy, you know. To-morrow, is it? Good-morning."

And with these words he went out.

With pale face and staring eyes Ethel darted back to the window. He did not see her. His back was turned. He mounted his horse and gayly cantered away. For full five minutes Ethel stood, crouched in the shadow of the window, staring after him, with her dark eyes burning and glowing in the intensity of their gaze. Then she turned away with a bewildered look. Then she locked the door. Then she flung herself upon the sofa, buried her head in her hands, and burst into a convulsive passion of tears. Miserable, indeed, were the thoughts that came now to that poor stricken girl as she lay there prostrate. She had waited long, and hoped fondly, and all her waiting and all her hope had been for this. It was for this that she had been praying—for this that she had so fondly cherished his memory. He had come at last, and he had gone; but for her he had certainly shown nothing save an indifference as profound as it was inexplicable.

Ethel's excuse for not appearing at the dinner-table was a severe headache. Her friends insisted on seeing her and ministering to her sufferings. Among other things, they tried to cheer her by telling her of Hawbury. Lady Dalrymple was full of him. She told all about his family, his income, his habits, and his mode of life. She mentioned, with much satisfaction, that he had made inquiries after Minnie, and that she had promised to introduce him to her the next time he called. Upon which he had laughingly insisted on calling the next day. All of which led Lady Dalrymple to conclude that he had seen Minnie somewhere, and had fallen in love with her.

This was the pleasing strain of conversation into which the ladies were led off by Lady Dalrymple. When I say the ladies, I mean Lady Dalrymple and Minnie. Mrs. Willoughby said nothing, except once or twice when she endeavored to give a turn to the conversation, in which she was signally unsuccessful. Lady Dalrymple and Minnie engaged in an animated argument over the interesting subject of Hawbury's intentions, Minnie taking her stand on the ground of his indifference, the other maintaining the position that he was in love. Minnie declared that she had never seen him. Lady Dalrymple asserted her belief that he had seen her. The latter also asserted that Hawbury would no

doubt be a constant visitor, and gave Minnie very sound advice as to the best mode of treating him.

On the following day Hawbury called, and was introduced to Minnie. He chatted with her in his usual style, and Lady Dalrymple was more than ever confirmed in her first belief. He suggested a ride, and the suggestion was taken up.

"THEN SHE FLUNG HERSELF UPON THE SOFA."

If any thing had been needed to complete Ethel's despair it was this second visit and the project of a ride. Mrs. Willoughby was introduced to him; but he took little notice of her, treating her with a kind of reserve that was a little unusual with him. The reason of this was his strong sympathy with his friend, and his detestation of Mrs. Willoughby's former history. Mrs. Willoughby, however, had to ride with them when they went out, and thus she was thrown a little more into Hawbury's way.

Ethel never made her appearance. The headaches which she avouched were not pretended. They were real, and accompanied with heartaches that were far more painful. Hawbury never saw her, nor did he ever hear her mentioned. In general he himself kept the conversation in motion; and as he never asked questions, they, of course, had no opportunity to answer. On the other hand, there was no occasion to volunteer any remarks about the number or the character of their party. When he talked it was usually with Lady Dalrymple and Minnie; and with these the conversation turned always upon glittering generalities, and the airy nothings of pleasant gossip. All this, then, will very easily account for the fact that Hawbury, though visiting there constantly, never once saw Ethel, never heard her name mentioned, and had not the faintest idea that she was so near. She, on the other hand, feeling now sure that he was utterly false and completely forgetful, proudly and calmly held aloof, and kept out of his way with the most jealous care, until at last she staid indoors altogether, for fear, if she went out, that she might meet him somewhere. For such a meeting she did not feel sufficiently strong.

Often she thought of quitting Naples and returning to England. Yet, after all, she found a strange comfort in being there. She was near him. She heard his voice every day, and saw his face. That was something. And it was better than absence.

Minnie used always to come to her and pour forth long accounts of Lord Hawbury—how he looked, what he said, what he did, and what he proposed to do. Certainly there was not the faintest approach to love-making, or even sentiment, in Hawbury's attitude toward Minnie. His words were of the world of small-talk—a world where sentiment and love-making have but little place. Still there was the evident fact of his attentions, which were too frequent to be overlooked.

Hawbury rapidly became the most prominent subject of Minnie's conversation. She used to prattle for hours about him. She alluded admiringly to his look while [illegible]. She thought them "lovely." She said that he was "awfully nice." She told Mrs. Willoughby that "he

was nicer than any of them; and then, Kitty darling," she added, "it's so awfully good of him not to be coming and saving my life, and carrying me on his back down a mountain, an ogre, and then pretending that he's my father, you know.

"For you know, Kitty pet, I've always longed so *awfully* to see some really nice person, you know, who wouldn't go and save my life and bother me. Now he doesn't seem a bit like proposing. I do *hope* he won't. Don't you, Kitty dearest? It's so *much* nicer not to propose. It's so *horrid* when they go and propose. And then, you know, I've had so much of that sort of thing. So, Kitty, I think he's really the nicest person that I ever saw, and I really think I'm beginning to like him."

Far different from these were the conversations which Mrs. Willoughby had with Ethel. She was perfectly familiar with Ethel's story. It had been confided to her long ago. She alone knew why it was that Ethel had walked untouched through crowds of admirers. The terrible story of her rescue was memorable to her for other reasons; and the one who had taken the prominent part in that rescue could not be without interest for her.

"There is no use, Kitty—no use in talking about it any more," said Ethel one day, after Mrs. Willoughby had been urging her to show herself. "I can not. I will not. He has forgotten me utterly."

"Perhaps he has no idea that you are here. He has never seen you."

"Has he not been in Naples as long as we have? He must have seen me in the streets. He saw Minnie."

"Do you think it likely that he would come to this house and slight you? If he had forgotten you he would not come here."

"Oh yes, he would. He comes to see Minnie. He knows I am here, of course. He doesn't care one atom whether I make my appearance or not. He doesn't even give me a thought. It's so long since *the time* that he has forgotten even my existence. He has been all over the world since then, and has had a hundred adventures. I have been living quietly, cherishing the remembrance of that one thing."

"Ethel, is it not worth trying? Go down and try him."

"I can not bear it. I can not look at him. I lose all self-command when he is near. I should make a fool of myself. He would look at me with a smile of pity. Could I endure that? No, Kitty; my weakness must never be known to him."

"Oh, Ethel, how I wish you could try it!"

"Kitty, just think how utterly I am forgotten. Mark this now. He knows I was at *your* house. He must remember your name. He wrote to me there, and I answered him from there. He sees you now, and your name must be associated with mine in his memory of me, if he has any. Tell me now, Kitty, has he ever mentioned me? has he ever asked you about me? has he ever made the remotest allusion to me?"

Ethel spoke rapidly and impetuously, and as she spoke she raised herself from the sofa where she was reclining, and turned her large, earnest eyes full upon her friend with anxious and eager watchfulness. Mrs. Willoughby looked back at her with a face full of sadness, and mournfully shook her head.

"You see," said Ethel, as she sank down again—"you see how true my impression is."

"I must say," said Mrs. Willoughby, "that I thought of this before. I fully expected that he would make some inquiry after you. I was so confident in the noble character of the man, both from your story and the description of others, that I could not believe you were right. But you are right, my poor Ethel. I wish I could comfort you, but I can not. Indeed, my dear, not only has he not questioned me about you, but he evidently avoids me. It is not that he is engrossed with Minnie, for he is not so; but he certainly has some reason of his own for avoiding me. Whenever he speaks to me there is an evident effort on his part, and though perfectly courteous, his manner leaves a certain disagreeable impression. Yes, he certainly has some reason for avoiding *me*."

"The reason is plain enough," murmured Ethel. "He wishes to prevent you from speaking about a painful subject, or at least a distasteful one. He keeps you off at a distance by an excess of formality. He will give you no opportunity whatever to introduce any mention of me. And now let me also ask you this—does he ever take any notice of any allusion that may be made to me?"

"I really don't remember hearing any allusion to you."

"Oh, that's scarcely possible! You and Minnie must sometimes have alluded to 'Ethel.'"

"Well, now that you put it in that light, I do remember hearing Minnie allude to you on several occasions. Once she wondered why 'Ethel' did not ride. Again she remarked how 'Ethel' would enjoy a particular view."

"And he heard it?"

"Oh, of course."

"Then there is not a shadow of a doubt left. He knows I am here. He has forgotten me so totally, and is so completely indifferent, that he comes here and pays attention to another who is in the very same house with me. It is hard. Oh, Kitty, is it not? Is it not bitter? How could I have thought this of *him*?"

A high-hearted girl was Ethel, and a proud one; but at this final confirmation of her worst fears there burst from her a sharp cry, and she buried her face in her hands, and moaned and wept.

CHAPTER XII.

GIRASOLE AGAIN.

One day Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie were out driving. Hawbury was riding by the carriage on the side next Minnie, when suddenly their attention was arrested by a gentleman on horseback who was approaching them at an easy pace, and staring hard at them. Minnie's hand suddenly grasped her sister's arm very tightly, while her color came and went rapidly.

"Oh dear!" sighed Mrs. Willoughby.

"Oh, what *shall* I do?" said Minnie, in a hasty whisper. "Can't we pretend not to see him?"

"Nonsense, you little goose," was the reply. "How can you think of such rudeness?"

By this time the gentleman had reached them, and Mrs. Willoughby stopped the carriage, and spoke to him in a tone of gracious suavity, in which there was a sufficient recognition of his claims upon her attention, mingled with a slight hauteur that was intended to act as a check upon his Italian demonstrativeness.

For it was no other than the Count Girasole, and his eyes glowed with excitement and delight, and his hat was off and as far away from his head as possible, and a thousand emotions contended together for expression upon his swarthy and handsome countenance. As soon as he could speak he poured forth a torrent of exclamations with amazing volubility, in the midst of which his keen black eyes scrutinized very closely the faces of the ladies, and finally turned an interrogative glance upon Hawbury, who sat on his horse regarding the new-comer with a certain mild surprise not unmingled with superciliousness. Hawbury's chin was in the air, his eyes rested languidly upon the stranger, and his left hand toyed with his left whisker. He really meant no offense whatever. He knew absolutely nothing about the stranger, and had not the slightest intention of giving offense. It was simply a way he had. It was merely the normal attitude of the English swell before he is introduced. As it was, that first glance which Girasole threw at the English lord inspired him with the bitterest hate, which was destined to produce important results afterward.

Mrs. Willoughby was too good-natured and too wise to slight the Count in any way. After introducing the two gentlemen she spoke a few more civil words, and then bowed him away. But Girasole did not at all take the hint. On the contrary, as the carriage started, he turned his horse and rode along with it on the side next Mrs. Willoughby. Hawbury elevated his eyebrows, and stared for an instant, and then went on talking with Minnie. And now Minnie showed much more animation than usual. She was much agitated and excited by this sudden appearance of one whom she hoped to have got rid of, and talked rapidly, and laughed nervously, and was so terrified at the idea that Girasole was near that she was afraid to look at him, but directed all her attention to Hawbury. It was a slight, and Girasole showed that he felt it; but Minnie could not help it. After a time Girasole mastered his feelings, and began an animated conversation with Mrs. Willoughby in very broken English. Girasole's excitement at Minnie's slight made him somewhat incoherent, his idioms were Italian rather than English, and his pronunciation was very bad; he also had a fashion of using an Italian word when he did not know the right English one, and so the consequence was that Mrs. Willoughby understood not much more than one-quarter of his remarks.

Mrs. Willoughby did not altogether enjoy this state of things, and so she determined to put an end to it by shortening her drive. She therefore watched for an opportunity to do this so as not to make it seem too marked, and finally reached a place which was suitable. Here the carriage was turned, when, just as it was half-way round, they noticed a horseman approaching. It was Scone Dacres, who had been following them all the time, and who had not expected that the carriage would turn. He was therefore taken completely by surprise, and was close to them before he could collect his thoughts so as to do any thing. To evade them was impossible, and so he rode on. As he approached, the ladies saw his face. It was a face that one would remember afterward. There was on it a profound sadness and dejection, while at the same time the prevailing expression was one of sternness. The ladies both bowed. Scone Dacres raised his hat, and disclosed his broad, massive brow. He did not look at Minnie. His gaze was fixed on Mrs. Willoughby. Her veil was down, and he seemed trying to read her face behind it. As he passed he threw a quick, vivid glance at Girasole. It was not a pleasant glance by any means, and was full of quick, fierce, and insolent scrutiny—a "Who-the-devil-are-you?" glance. It was for but an instant, however, and then he glanced at Mrs. Willoughby again, and then he had passed.

The ladies soon reached their home, and at once retired to Mrs. Willoughby's room. There Minnie flung herself upon the sofa, and Mrs. Willoughby sat down, with a perplexed face.

"What in the world *are* we to do?" said she.

"I'm sure *I* don't know," said Minnie. "I *knew* it was going to be so. I said that he would find me again."

"He is *so* annoying."

"Yes, but, Kitty dear, we can't be rude to him, you know, for he saved my life. But it's horrid, and I really begin to feel quite desperate."

"I certainly will not let him see you. I have made up my mind to that."

"And oh! how he *will* be coming and calling, and tease, tease, teasing. Oh dear! I do wonder what Lord Hawbury thought. He looked *so* amazed. And then—oh, Kitty dear,

it was so awfully funny!—did you notice that other man?"

Mrs. Willoughby nodded her head.

"Did you notice how awfully black he looked? He wouldn't look at me at all. *I* know why."

Mrs. Willoughby said nothing.

"He's awfully jealous. Oh, *I* know it. I saw it in his face. He was as black as a thunder-cloud. Oh dear! And it's all about me. Oh, Kitty darling, what *shall* I do? There will be something dreadful, I know. And how shocking to have it about me. And then the newspapers. They'll all have it. And the reporters. Oh dear! Kitty, why *don't* you say something?"

"Why, Minnie dearest, I really don't know what to say."

"But, darling, you must say something. And then that Scone Dacres. I'm more afraid of him than any body. Oh, I know he's going to *kill* some one. He is so big. Oh, if *you* had only been on his back, Kitty darling, and had him run down a steep mountain-side, you'd be as awfully afraid of him as I am. Oh, how I *wish* Lord Hawbury would drive them off, or somebody do something to save me."

"Would you rather that Lord Hawbury would stay, or would you like him to go too?"

"Oh dear! I don't care. If he would only go quietly and nicely, I should like to have him go too, and never, never see a man again except dear papa. And I think it's a shame. And I don't see why I should be so persecuted. And I'm tired of staying here. And I don't want to stay here any more. And, Kitty darling, why shouldn't we all go to Rome?"

"To Rome?"

"Yes."

"Would you prefer Rome?" asked Mrs. Willoughby, thoughtfully.

"Well, yes—for several reasons. In the first place, I must go somewhere, and I'd rather go there than any where else. Then, you know, that dear, delightful holy-week will soon be here, and I'm dying to be in Rome."

"I think it would be better for all of us," said Mrs. Willoughby, thoughtfully—"for all of us, if we were in Rome."

"Of course it would, Kitty sweetest, and especially me. Now if I am in Rome, I can pop into a convent whenever I choose."

"A convent!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, in surprise.

"Oh yes—it's going to come to that. They're all so horrid, you know. Besides, it's getting worse. I got a letter yesterday from Captain Kirby, written to me in England. He didn't know I was here. He has just arrived at London, and was leaving for our place on what he called the wings of the wind. I expect him here at almost any time. Isn't it dreadful, Kitty dearest, to have so many? As fast as one goes another comes, and then they all come together; and do you know, darling, it really makes one feel quite dizzy. I'm sure *I* don't know what to do. And that's why I'm thinking of a convent, you know."

"But you're not a Catholic."

"Oh yes, I am, you know. Papa's an Anglo-Catholic, and I don't see the difference. Besides, they're all the time going over to Rome; and why shouldn't I? I'll be a novice—that is, you know, I'll only go for a time, and not take the vows. The more I think of it, the more I see that it's the only thing there is for me to do."

"Well, Minnie, I really think so too, and not only for you, but for all of us. There's Ethel, too; poor dear girl, her health is very miserable, you know. I think a change would do her good."

"Of course it would; I've been talking to her about it. But she won't hear of leaving Naples. I *wish* she wouldn't be so awfully sad."

"Oh yes; it will certainly be the best thing for dear Ethel, and for you and me and all of us. Then we must be in Rome in holy-week. I wouldn't miss that for any thing."

"And then, too, you know, Kitty darling, there's another thing," said Minnie, very confidentially, "and it's very important. In Rome, you know, all the gentlemen are clergymen—only, you know, the clergymen of the Roman Church can't marry; and so, you know, of course, they can never propose, no matter if they were to save one's life over and over again. And oh! what a relief that would be to find one's self among those dear, darling, delightful priests, and no chance of having one's life saved and having an instant proposal following! It would be *so* charming."

Mrs. Willoughby smiled.

"Well, Minnie dearest," said she, "I really think that we had better decide to go to Rome, and I don't see any difficulty in the way."

"The only difficulty that I can see," said Minnie, "is that I shouldn't like to hurt their feelings, you know."

"Their feelings!" repeated her sister, in a doleful voice.

"Yes; but then, you see, some one's feelings *must* be hurt eventually, so that lessens one's responsibility, you know; doesn't it, Kitty darling?"

While saying this Minnie had risen and gone to the window, with the intention of taking her seat by it. No sooner had she reached the place, however, than she started back, with a low exclamation, and, standing on one side, looked cautiously forth.

"Come here," she said, in a whisper.

Mrs. Willoughby went over, and Minnie directed her attention to some one outside. It was a gentleman on horseback, who was passing at a slow pace. His head was bent on his breast. Suddenly, as he passed, he raised his head and threw over the house a quick, searching glance. They could see without being seen. They marked the profound sadness that was over his face, and saw the deep disappointment with which his head fell.

"Scone Dacres!" said Minnie, as he passed on. "How *awfully* sad he is!"

Mrs. Willoughby said nothing.

"But, after all, I don't believe it's *me*."

"Why not?"

"Because he didn't look at me a bit when he passed to-day. He looked at you, though."

"Nonsense!"

"Yes, and his face had an *awfully* hungry look. I know what makes him sad."

"What?"

"He's in love with you."

Mrs. Willoughby stared at Minnie for a moment. Then a short laugh burst from her.

"Child!" she exclaimed, "you have no idea of any thing in the world but falling in love. You will find out some day that there are other feelings than that."

"But, Kitty dear," said Minnie, "didn't you notice something very peculiar about him?"

"What?"

"I noticed it. I had a good look at him. I saw that he fixed his eyes on you with—oh! *such* a queer look. And he was awfully sad too. He looked as if he would like to seize you and lift you on his horse and carry you off, just like young Lochinvar."

"Me!" said Mrs. Willoughby, with a strange intonation.

"Yes, you—oh yes; really now."

"Oh, you little goose, you always think of people rushing after one and carrying one off."

"Well, I'm sure I've had reason to. So many people have always been running after me, and snatching me up as if I were a parcel, and carrying me every where in all sorts of places. And I think it's too bad, and I really wish they'd stop it. But, Kitty dear—

"What?"

"About this Scone Dacres. Don't you really think there's something very peculiarly sad, and very delightfully interesting and pathetic, and all that sort of thing, in his poor dear old face?"

"I think Scone Dacres has suffered a great deal," said Mrs. Willoughby, in a thoughtful tone. "But come now. Let us go to Ethel. She's lonely."

Soon after they joined the other ladies, and talked over the project of going to Rome. Lady Dalrymple offered no objection; indeed, so far as she had any choice, she preferred it. She was quite willing at all times to do whatever the rest proposed, and also was not without some curiosity as to the proceedings during holy-week. Ethel offered no objections either. She had fallen into a state of profound melancholy, from which nothing now could rouse her, and so she listened listlessly to the discussion about the subject. Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie had the most to say on this point, and offered the chief reasons for going; and [illegible] was finally decided to take their departure, and to start as soon as possible.

Meanwhile Girasole had his own thoughts and experiences. He had already, some time before, been conscious that his attentions were not wanted, but it was only on the part of the other ladies that he noticed any repugnance to himself. On Minnie's part he had not seen any. In spite of their graciousness and their desire not to hurt his feelings, they had not been able to avoid showing that, while they felt grateful for his heroism in the rescue of Minnie, they could not think of giving her to him. They had manœuvred well enough to get rid of him, but Girasole had also manœuvred on his part to find them again. He had fallen off from them at first when he saw that they were determined on effecting this; but after allowing a sufficient time to elapse, he had no difficulty in tracking them, and finding them at Naples, as we have seen.

But here he made one or two discoveries.

One was that Minnie already had an accepted lover in the person of Lord Hawbury. The lofty superciliousness of the British nobleman seemed to Girasole to be the natural result of his position, and it seemed the attitude of the successful lover toward the rejected suitor.

The other discovery was that Minnie herself was more pleased with the attentions of the English lord than with his own. This was now evident, and he could not help perceiving that his difficulties were far more formidable from the presence of such a rival.

But Girasole was not easily daunted. In the first place, he had unbounded confidence in his own fascinations; in the second place, he believed that he had a claim on Minnie that no other could equal, in the fact that he had saved her life; in the third place, apart from the question of love, he believed her to be a prize of no common value, whose English gold would be welcome indeed to his Italian need and greed; while, finally, the bitter hate with which Lord Hawbury had inspired him gave an additional zest to the pursuit, and made him follow after Minnie with fresh ardor.

Once or twice after this he called upon them. On the first occasion only Lady Dalrymple was visible. On the second, none of the ladies were at home. He was baffled, but not discouraged. Returning from his call, he met Minnie and Mrs. Willoughby. Hawbury was with them, riding beside Minnie. The ladies bowed, and Girasole, as before, coolly turned his horse and rode by the carriage, talking with Mrs. Willoughby, and trying to throw at Minnie what he intended to be impassioned glances. But Minnie would not look at him. Of course she was frightened as usual, and grew excited, and, as before, talked with unusual animation to Hawbury. Thus she overdid it altogether, and more than ever confirmed Girasole in the opinion that she and Hawbury were affianced.

Two days after this Girasole called again.

A bitter disappointment was in store for him.

They were not there—they had gone.

Eagerly he inquired where.

"To Rome," was the reply.

"To Rome!" he muttered, between his set

"'TO ROME!' HE MUTTERED, BETWEEN HIS SET TEETH."

teeth; and mounting his horse hurriedly, he rode away.

He was not one to be daunted. He had set a certain task before himself, and could not easily be turned aside. He thought bitterly of the ingratitude with which he had been treated. He brought before his mind the "stony British stare," the supercilious smile, and the impertinent and insulting expression of Hawbury's face as he sat on his saddle, with his chin up, stroking his whiskers, and surveyed him for the first time. All these things combined to stimulate the hate as well as the love of Girasole. He felt that he himself was not one who could be lightly dismissed, and determined that they should learn this.

CHAPTER XIII.

VAIN REMONSTRANCES.

HAWBURY had immolated himself for as much as half a dozen times to gratify Dacres. He had sacrificed himself over and over upon the altar of friendship, and had allowed himself to be bored to death because Dacres so wished it. The whole number of his calls was in reality only about five or six; but that number, to one of his taste and temperament, seemed positively enormous, and represented an immense amount of human suffering.

One day, upon reaching his quarters, after one of these calls, he found Dacres there, making himself, as usual, very much at home.

"Well, my dear fellow," said Hawbury, cheerfully, "how waves the flag now? Are you hauling it down, or are you standing to your guns? Toss over the cigars, and give an account of yourself."

"Do you know any thing about law, Hawbury?" was Dacres's answer.

"Law?"

"Yes."

"No, not much. But what in the world makes you ask such a question as that? Law! No—not I."

"Well, there's a point that I should like to ask somebody about."

"Why not get a lawyer?"

"An Italian lawyer's no use."

"Well, English lawyers are to be found. I dare say there are twenty within five minutes' distance of this place."

"Oh, I don't want to bother. I only wanted to ask some one's opinion in a general way."

"Well, what's the point?"

"Why this," said Dacres, after a little hesitation. "You've heard of outlawry?"

"Should think I had—Robin Hood and his merry men, Lincoln green, Sherwood Forest, and all that sort of thing, you know. But what the mischief sets you thinking about Robin Hood?"

"Oh, I don't mean that rot. I mean real outlawry—when a fellow's in debt, you know."

"Well?"

"Well; if he goes out of the country, and stays away a certain number of years, the debt's outlawed, you know."

"The deuce it is! Is it, though? *I've* been in debt, but I always managed to pull through without getting so far. But that's convenient for some fellows too."

"I'm a little muddy about it, but I've heard something to this effect. I think the time is seven years. If the debt is not acknowledged during the interval, it's outlawed. And now, 'pon my life, my dear fellow, I really don't know but that I've jumbled up some fragments of English law with American. I felt that I was muddy, and so I thought I'd ask you."

"Don't know any more about it than about the antediluvians."

"It's an important point, and I should like to have it looked up."

"Well, get a lawyer here; half London is on the Continent. But still, my dear fellow, I don't see what you're driving at. You're not in debt?"

"No—this isn't debt; but it struck me that this might possibly apply to other kinds of contracts."

"Oh!"

"Yes."

"How—such as what, for instance?"

"Well, you see, I thought, you know, that all contracts might be included under it; and so I thought that if seven years or so annulled all contracts, it might have some effect, you know, upon—the—the—the marriage contract, you know."

At this Hawbury started up, stared at Dacres, gave a loud whistle, and then exclaimed,

"By Jove!"

"I may be mistaken," said Dacres, modestly.

"Mistaken? Why, old chap, you're mad. Marriage? Good Lord! don't you know nothing can abrogate that? Of course, in case of crime, one can get a divorce; but there is no other way. Seven years? By Jove! A good idea that. Why, man, if that were so, the kingdom would be depopulated. Husbands running off from wives, and wives from husbands, to pass the required seven years abroad. By Jove! You see, too, there's another thing, my boy. Marriage is a sacrament, and you've not only got to untie the civil knot, but the clerical one, my boy. No, no; there's no help for it. You gave your word, old chap, 'till death do us part,' and you're in for it."

At this Dacres said nothing; it appeared to dispel his project from his mind. He relapsed into a sullen sort of gloom, and remained so for some time. At last he spoke:

"Hawbury!"

"Well?"

"Have you found out who that fellow is?"

"What fellow?"

"Why that yellow Italian that goes prowling around after my wife."

"Oh yes, I heard something or other today."

"What was it?"

"Well, it seems that he saved her life, or something of that sort."

"Saved her life!" Dacres started. "How? where? Cool, too!"

"Oh, on the Alps somewhere."

"On the Alps! saved her life! Come now, I like that," said Dacres, with bitter intonation. Aha! don't I know her? I warrant you she contrived all that! Oh, she's deep! But how did it happen? Did you hear?"

"Well, I didn't hear any thing very definite. It was something about a precipice. It was Lady Dalrymple that told me. It seems she was knocked over a precipice by an avalanche."

"Was what? Knocked where? Over a precipice? By a what—an avalanche? Good Lord! I don't believe it. I swear I don't. She invented it all. It's some of her infernal humbug. She slid off over the snow, so as to get him to go after her. Oh, don't I know her and her ways!"

"Well, come now, old man, you shouldn't be too hard on her. You never said that flirtation was one of her faults."

"Well, neither it was; but, as she is a demon, she's capable of any thing; and now she has sobered down, and all her vices have taken this turn. Oh yes. I know her. No more storm now—no rage, no fury—all quiet and sly. Flirtation! Ha, ha! That's the word. And my wife! And going about the country, tumbling over precipices, with devilish handsome Italians going down to save her life! Ha, ha, ha! I like that!"

"See here, old boy, I swear you're too suspicious. Come now. You're going too far. If she chooses, she may trump up the same charge against you and the child-angel at Vesuvius. Come now, old boy, be just. You can afford to. Your wife may be a fiend in human form; and if you insist upon it, I've nothing to say. But this last notion of yours is nothing but the most wretched absurdity. It's worse. It's lunacy."

"Well, well," said Dacres, in a milder tone; "perhaps she didn't contrive it. But then, you know," he added, "it's just as good for her. She gets the Italian. Ha, ha, ha!"

His laugh was forced, feverish, and unnatural. Hawbury didn't like it, and tried to change the subject.

"Oh, by-the-way," said he, "you needn't have any further trouble about any of them. You don't seem inclined to take any definite action, so the action will be taken for you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that they are all going to leave Naples."

"To leave Naples!"

Dacres uttered this in a voice of grief and surprise which astonished Hawbury and touched him.

"Yes," he said. "You know they've been here long enough. They want to see Rome. Holy-week, you know. No end of excitement. Illumination of St. Peter's, and all that sort of thing, you know."

Dacres relapsed into sombre silence. For more than half an hour he did not say a word. Hawbury respected his mood, and watched him with something approaching to anxiety.

"Hawbury," said he at last.

"Well, old man?"

"I'm going to Rome."

"You—to Rome!"

"Yes, me, to Rome."

"Oh, nonsense! See here, old boy. You'd really better not, you know. Break it up. You can't do any thing."

"I'm going to Rome," repeated Dacres, stolidly. "I've made up my mind."

"But, really," remonstrated Hawbury. "See here now, my dear fellow; look here, you know. By Jove! you don't consider, really."

"Oh yes, I do. I know every thing; I consider every thing."

"But what good will it do?"

"It won't do any good; but it may prevent some evil."

"Nothing but evil can ever come of it."

"Oh, no evil need necessarily come of it."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Hawbury, who began to be excited. "Really, my dear fellow, you don't think. You see you can't gain any thing. She's surrounded by friends, you know. She never can be yours, you know. There's a great gulf between you, and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Yes," repeated Dacres, catching his words—"yes, a great gulf, as deep as the bot-

tomless abyss, never to be traversed, where she stands on one side, and I on the other, and between us hate, deep and pitiless hate, undying, eternal!"

"Then, by Jove! my dear fellow, what's the use of trying to fight against it? You can't do any thing. If this were Indiana, now, or even New York, I wouldn't say any thing, you know; but you know an Indiana divorce wouldn't do *you* any good. Her friends wouldn't take you on those terms—and she wouldn't. Not she, by Jove!"

"I *must* go. I must follow her," continued Dacres. "The sight of her has roused a devil within me that I thought was laid. I'm a changed man, Hawbury."

"I should think so, by Jove!"

"A changed man," continued Dacres. "Oh, Heavens, what power there is in a face! What terrific influence it has over a man! Here am I; a few days ago I was a free man; now I am a slave. But, by Heaven! I'll follow her to the world's end. She shall not shake me off. She thinks to be happy without me. She shall not. I will silently follow as an avenging fate. I can not have her, and no one else shall. The same cursed fate that severs her from me shall keep her away from others. If I am lonely and an exile, she shall not be as happy as she expects. I shall not be the only one to suffer."

"See here, by Jove!" cried Hawbury. "Really. You're going too far, my dear boy, you know. You are, really. Come now. This is just like a Surrey theatre, you know. You're really raving. Why, my poor old boy, you *must* give her up. You can't do any thing. You daren't call on her. You're tied hand and foot. You may worship her here, and rave about your child-angel till you're black in the face, but you never can see her; and as to all this about stopping her from marrying any other person, that's all rot and bosh. What do you suppose any other man would care for your nonsensical ravings? Lonely and an exile! Why, man, she'll be married and done for in three months."

"You don't understand me," said Dacres, dryly.

"I'm glad that I don't; but it's no wonder, old man, for really you were quite incoherent."

"And so they're going to Rome," said Dacres. "Well, they'll find that I'm not to be shaken off so easily.

"Come now, old man, you *must* give up that."

"And I suppose," continued Dacres, with a sneer, "our handsome, dark-eyed little Italian cavalier is going with us. Ha, ha, ha! He's at the house all the time, no doubt."

"Well, yes; he was there once."

"Ah! of course—quite devoted."

"Oh yes; but don't be afraid. It was not to the child-angel. She appears to avoid him. That's really quite evident. It's an apparent aversion on her part."

Dacres drew a long breath.

"Oh," said he; "and so I suppose it's not *her* that *he* goes after. I did not suppose that it was. Oh no. There's another one—more piquant, you know—ha, ha!—a devoted lover—saved her life—quite devoted—and she sits and accepts his attentions. Yet she's seen me, and knows that I'm watching her. Don't she know *me?* Does she want any further proof of what I am ready to do? The ruins of Dacres Grange should serve her for life. She tempts fate when she carries on her gallantries and her Italian cicisbeism under the eyes of Scone Dacres. It 'll end bad. By Heaven, it will!"

Scone Dacres breathed hard, and, raising his head, turned upon Hawbury a pair of eyes whose glow seemed of fire.

"Bad!" he repeated, crashing his fist on the table. "Bad, by Heaven!"

Hawbury looked at him earnestly.

"My dear boy," said he, "you're getting too excited. Be cool. Really, I don't believe you know what you're saying. I don't understand what you mean. Haven't the faintest idea what you're driving at. You're making ferocious threats against some people, but, for my life, I don't know who they are. Hadn't you better try to speak so that a fellow can understand the general drift, at least, of what you say?"

"Well, then, you understand this much—I'm going to Rome."

"I'm sorry for it, old boy."

"And see here, Hawbury, I want you to come with me."

"Me? What for?"

"Well, I want you. I may have need of you."

As Dacres said this his face assumed so dark and gloomy an expression that Hawbury began to think that there was something serious in all this menace.

"'Pon my life," said he, "my dear boy, I really don't think you're in a fit state to be allowed to go by yourself. You look quite desperate. I wish I could make you give up this infernal Roman notion."

"I'm going to Rome!" repeated Dacres, resolutely.

Hawbury looked at him

"You'll come, Hawbury, won't you?"

"Why, confound it all, of course. I'm afraid you'll do something rash, old man, and you'll have to have me to stand between you and harm."

"Oh, don't be concerned about me," said Dacres. "I only want to watch her, and see what her little game is. I want to look at her in the midst of her happiness. She's most infernally beautiful, too; hasn't added a year or a day to her face; more lovely than ever; more beautiful than she was even when I first saw her. And there's a softness about her that she never had before. Where the deuce did she get that? Good idea of hers, too, to cultivate the

soft style. And there's sadness in her face, too. Can it be real? By Heavens! if I thought it could be real I'd—but pooh! what insanity! It's her art. There never was such cunning. She cultivates the soft, sad style so as to attract lovers—lovers—who adore her—who save her life—who become her obedient slaves! Oh yes; and I—what am I? Why they get together and laugh at me; they giggle; they snicker—"

"Confound it all, man, what are you going on at that rate for?" interrupted Hawbury. "Are you taking leave of your senses altogether? By Jove, old man, you'd better give up this Roman journey."

"No, I'll keep at it."

"What for? Confound it! I don't see your object."

"My object? Why, I mean to follow her. I can't give her up. I won't give her up. I'll follow her. She shall see me every where. I'll follow her. She sha'n't go any where without seeing me on her track. She shall see that she is mine. She shall know that she's got a master. She shall find herself cut off from that butterfly life which she hopes to enter. I'll be her fate, and she shall know it."

"By Jove!" cried Hawbury. "What the deuce is all this about? Are you mad, or what? Look here, old boy, you're utterly beyond me you know. What the mischief do you mean? Whom are you going to follow? Whose fate are you going to be? Whose track are you talking about?"

"Who?" cried Dacres. "Why, my wife!"

As he said this he struck his [illegible] on the table.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Hawbury, staring at him; after which he added, thoughtfully, "by Jove!"

Not much more was said. Dacres sat in silence for a long time, breathing hard and puffing violently at his cigar. Hawbury said nothing to interrupt his meditation. After an hour or so Dacres tramped off in silence, and Hawbury was left to meditate over the situation.

And this was the result of his meditations.

He saw that Dacres was greatly excited, and had changed completely from his old self. His state of mind seemed actually dangerous. There was an evil gleam in his eyes that looked like madness. What made it more perplexing still was the new revulsion of feeling that now was manifest. It was not so much love for the child angel as bitter and venomous hate for his wife. The gentler feeling had given place to the stronger one. It might have been possible to attempt an argument against the indulgence of the former; but what could words avail against revenge? And now there was rising in the soul of Dacres an evident thirst for vengeance, the result of those injuries which had been carried in his heart and brooded over for years. The sight of his wife had evidently kindled all this. If she had not come across his path he might have forgotten all; but she had come, and all was revived. She had come, too, in a shape which was adapted in the highest degree to stimulate all the passion of Dacres's soul—young, beautiful, fascinating, elegant, refined, rich, honored, courted, and happy. Upon such a being as this the homeless wanderer, the outcast, looked, and his soul seemed turned to fire as he gazed. Was it any wonder?

All this Hawbury thought, and with full sympathy for his injured friend. He saw also that Dacres could not be trusted by himself. Some catastrophe would be sure to occur. He determined, therefore, to accompany his friend, so as to do what he could to avert the calamity which he dreaded.

And this was the reason why he went with Dacres to Rome.

As for Dacres, he seemed to be animated by but one motive, which he expressed over and over again:

"She stood between me and my child-angel, and so will I stand between her and her Italian!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ZOUAVE OFFICER.

WHATEVER trouble Ethel had experienced at Naples from her conviction that Hawbury was false was increased and, if possible, intensified by the discovery that he had followed them to Rome. His true motives for this could not possibly be known to her, so she, of course, concluded that it was his infatuation for Minnie, and his determination to win her for himself. She felt confident that he knew that she belonged to the party, but was so utterly indifferent to her that he completely ignored her, and had not sufficient interest in her to ask the commonest question about her. All this, of course, only confirmed her previous opinion, and it also deepened her melancholy. One additional effect it also had, and that was to deprive her of any pleasure that might be had from drives about Rome. She felt a morbid dread of meeting him somewhere; she did not yet feel able to encounter him; she could not trust herself; she felt sure that if she saw him she would lose all self-control, and make an exhibition of humiliating weakness. The dread of this was sufficient to detain her at home; and so she remained indoors, a prisoner, refusing her liberty, brooding over her troubles, and striving to acquire that indifference to him which she believed he had toward her. Now going about was the very thing which would have alleviated her woes, but this was the very thing that she was unwilling to do; nor could any persuasion shake her resolve.

One day Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie were out driving, and in passing through a street they encountered a crowd in front of one of the churches. Another crowd was inside, and, as something was going on, they stopped the carriage and sat looking. The Swiss Guards were

there in their picturesque costume, and the cardinals in their scarlet robes and scarlet coaches, and military officers of high rank, and carriages of the Roman aristocracy filled with beautiful ladies. Something of importance was going on, the nature of which they did not know. A little knot of Englishmen stood near; and from their remarks the ladies gathered that this was the Church of the Jesuits, and that the Pope in person was going to perform high-mass, and afterward hold a reception.

Soon there arose a murmur and a bustle among the crowd, which was succeeded by a deep stillness. The Swiss Guards drove the throng to either side, and a passage-way was thus formed through the people to the church. A carriage drove up in great state. In this was seated an elderly gentleman in rich pontifical robes. He had a mild and gentle face, upon which was a sweet and winning smile. No face is more attractive than that of Pio Nono.

"Oh, look!" cried Minnie; "that must be the Pope. Oh, what a darling!"

Mrs. Willoughby, however, was looking elsewhere.

"Minnie," said she.

"What, Kitty dear?"

"Are you acquainted with any Zouave officer?"

"Zouave officer! Why, no; what put such a thing as that into your head, you old silly?"

"Because there's a Zouave officer over there in the crowd who has been staring fixedly at us ever since we came up, and trying to make signals, and it's my opinion he's signaling to you. Look at him; he's over there on the top of the steps."

"I won't look," said Minnie, pettishly. "How do I know who he is? I declare I'm afraid to look at any body. He'll be coming and saving my life."

"I'm sure this man is an old acquaintance."

"Nonsense! how can he be?"

"It may be Captain Kirby."

"How silly! Why, Captain Kirby is in the Rifles."

"Perhaps he is dressed this way just for amusement. Look at him."

"Now, Kitty, I think you're unkind. You *know* I don't want to look at him; I don't want to see him. I don't care who he is—the great, big, ugly, old horrid! And if you say any thing more, I'll go home."

Mrs. Willoughby was about to say something, but her attention and Minnie's, and that of every one else, was suddenly diverted to another quarter.

Among the crowd they had noticed a tall man, very thin, with a lean, cadaverous face, and long, lanky, rusty black hair. He wore a white necktie, and a suit of rusty black clothes. He also held a large umbrella in his hand, which he kept carefully up out of the way of the crowd. This figure was a conspicuous one, even in that crowd; and the ladies had noticed it at the very first.

As the Pope drove up they saw this long, slim, thin, cadaverous man, in his suit of rusty black, edging his way through the crowd, so as to get nearer, until at length he stood immediately behind the line of Swiss Guards, who were keeping the crowd back, and forming a passage-way for the Pope. Meanwhile his Holiness was advancing through the crowd. He reached out his hand, and smiled and bowed and murmured a blessing over them. At last his carriage stopped. The door was opened, and several attendants prepared to receive the Pope and assist him out.

At that instant the tall, slim stranger pushed forward his sallow head, with its long, lanky, and rusty black hair, between two Swiss Guards, and tried to squeeze between them. The Swiss at first stood motionless, and the stranger had actually succeeded in getting about half-way through. He was immediately in front of his Holiness, and staring at him with all his might. His Holiness saw this very peculiar face, and was so surprised that he uttered an involuntary exclamation, and stopped short in his descent.

The stranger stopped short too, and quite involuntarily also. For the Swiss Guards, irritated by his pertinacity, and seeing the Pope's gesture, turned suddenly, and two of them grasped the stranger by his coat collar.

It was, of course, an extremely undignified attitude for the Swiss Guards, whose position is simply an ornamental one. Nothing but the most unparalleled outrage to their dignity could have moved them to this. So unusual a display of energy, however, did not last long. A few persons in citizens' clothes darted forward from among the crowd, and secured the stranger; while the Swiss, seeing who they were, resumed their erect, rigid, and ornamental attitude. The Pope found no longer any obstacle, and resumed his descent. For a moment the stranger had created a wide-spread consternation in the breasts of all the different and very numerous classes of men who composed that crowd. The arrest was the signal for a murmur of voices, among which the ladies heard those of the knot of Englishmen who stood near.

"It's some Garibaldian," said they.

And this was the general sentiment.

Several hours after this they were at home, and a caller was announced. It was the Baron Atramonte.

"Atramonte!" said Lady Dalrymple. "Who is that? We're not at home, of course. Atramonte! Some of these Italian nobles. Really, I think we have seen enough of them. Who is he, Kitty?"

"I'm sure I haven't the faintest idea. I never heard of him in my life."

"We're not at home, of course. It's a singular way, and surely can not be Roman fashion. It's not civilized fashion. But the Continental nobility are so odd."

In a few minutes the servant, who had been dispatched to say, "Not at home," returned with the statement that the Baron wished particularly to see Miss Fay on urgent business.

At this extra
rymple and Mrs.
another, and the
"I'm sure *I* do
said Minnie. "
do go and see wh
please! Oh, do,
"Well, I supp
son," said Lady
"There must be
dressed?" she as
military gentlema
belong to the arm
"Yes, my lady.
At this Mrs. W
at one another.
and as no other
usual, in her room,
said,
"I thought that
"Well, I'm sur
Minnie. "I neve
my life."
"It may be Capt
name and a disguis
"Oh no, it isn't.
be such a perfect
somebody, though,
me. Oh, what sha
"Nonsense! Y
see him, and send h
"Oh, I do so hop
he won't."
After a short time

"TWO OF THEM GRASPED THE STRANGER BY HIS COAT COLLAR."

At this extraordinary message Lady Dalrymple and Mrs. Willoughby looked first at one another, and then at Minnie, in amazement.

"I'm sure *I* don't know any thing about him," said Minnie. "They *always* tease me so. Oh, do go and see who he is, and send him away—please! Oh, do, please, Dowdy dear!"

"Well, I suppose I had better see the person," said Lady Dalrymple, good-naturedly. "There must be some mistake. How is he dressed?" she asked the servant. "Is he a military gentleman? Most of them seem to belong to the army."

"Yes, my lady. Zouave dress, my lady."

At this Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie looked at one another. Lady Dalrymple went away; and as no other was present, Ethel being, as usual, in her room, Mrs. Willoughby sighed and said,

"I thought that man must know you."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know him," said Minnie. "I never knew a Zouave officer in my life."

"It may be Captain Kirby, under an assumed name and a disguise."

"Oh no, it isn't. I don't believe he would be such a perfect—monster. Oh dear! It's somebody, though. It must be. And he wants me. Oh, what *shall* I do?"

"Nonsense! You need not go. Aunty will see him, and send him off."

"Oh, I do *so* hope he'll go; but I'm afraid he won't."

After a short time Lady Dalrymple returned.

"Really," said she, "this is a most extraordinary person. He speaks English, but not at all like an Englishman. I don't know who he is. He calls himself a Baron, but he doesn't seem to be a foreigner. I'm puzzled."

"I hope he's gone," said Mrs. Willoughby.

"No—that's the worst of it. He won't go. He says he must see Minnie, and he won't tell his errand. I told him that he could not see you, but that I would tell you what he wanted, and that you were not at home. And what do you think he said?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Dowdy dear."

"Why, he said he had nothing to do, and would wait till you came back. And he took his seat in a way that showed that he meant to wait. Really, I'm quite at a loss what to do. You'll have to see him, Kitty dear."

"What a strange person!" said Mrs. Willoughby. "It's *so* rude. And don't you know what he is? How do you know he isn't an Italian?"

"Oh, his English, you know. He speaks it perfectly, but not like an Englishman, you know, nor like a Scotchman either, or an Irishman. I wonder whether he may not be an American?"

At this Minnie started.

"Oh dear!" she said.

"What's the matter, darling?"

"An American! Oh dear! what *will* become of me!"

"Why," said Lady Dalrymple, "do you know him, then, after all?"

"Oh, I'm *so* afraid that I know him!"

"Who is it, dear?"

"Oh, Dowdy! Oh, Kitty!"

"What's the matter?"

"It must be that man. Oh, was there *ever* such a trouble—"

"Really, Minnie dearest, you are allowing yourself to get too agitated. Who *is* this person?"

"He—he's—an—American."

"An American? Why, I just said that I thought he might be one. I didn't know that you were acquainted with any."

"Oh yes: I did get acquainted with some in—in Canada."

"Oh; and is this man a Canadian?"

"No, Dowdy darling; only an American."

"Well, if he's a friend of yours, I suppose you know something about him. But how singular it is that you have so completely forgotten his name. Atramonte? Why, I'm sure it's a *very* singular name for an American gentleman—at least it seems so to me—but I don't know much about them, you know. Tell me, darling, who is he?"

"He—he saved my life."

"What! saved your life? Why, my precious child, what *are* you talking about? It was the Italian that saved your life, you know, not this one."

"Oh, but he did too," said Minnie, despairingly. "I couldn't help it. He would do it. Papa was washed away. I wish they all wouldn't be so horrid."

Lady Dalrymple looked in an equally despairing manner at Mrs. Willoughby.

"What is it, Kitty dear? *Is* the child insane, or what does she mean? How could this person have saved her life?"

"That's just what distracts me," said Minnie. "They all do it. Every single person comes and saves my life. And now I suppose I must go down and see this person."

"Well, really, since you say he saved your life, perhaps it would be as well not to be uncivil," said Lady Dalrymple; "but, at the same time, he seems to me to act in a very extraordinary manner. And he calls himself a Baron. Do they have nobles in America?"

"I'm sure I don't know, Dowdy dear. I never knew that he was a Baron. He may have been the son of some American Baron; and—and— I'm sure I don't know."

"Nonsense, Minnie dear," said Mrs. Willoughby. "This man's title is a foreign one. He probably obtained it in Italy or Spain, or perhaps Mexico. I think they have titles in Mexico, though I really don't know."

"Why, of course, one isn't expected to know any thing about America," said Lady Dalrymple. "I can mention quite a number of English statesmen, members of the cabinet, and others, who don't know any more about America than I do."

"Do you really intend to go down yourself and see him, Minnie dear?" asked Mrs. Willoughby.

"How can I help it? What am I to do? I must go, Kitty darling. He is so very positive, and—and he insists so. I don't want to hurt his feelings, you know; and I really think there is nothing for me to do but to go. What do you think about it, Dowdy dear?" and she appealed to her aunt.

"Well, Minnie, my child, I think it would be best not to be unkind or uncivil, since he saved your life."

Upon this Minnie accompanied her sister to see the visitor.

Mrs. Willoughby entered the room first, and Minnie was close behind her, as though she sought protection from some unknown peril. On entering the room they saw a man dressed in Zouave uniform. His hair was cropped short; he wore a mustache and no beard; his features were regular and handsome; while a pair of fine dark eyes were looking earnestly at the door, and the face and the eyes had the expression of one who is triumphantly awaiting the result of some agreeable surprise. Mrs. Willoughby at once recognized the stranger as the Zouave officer who had stared at them near the Church of the Jesuits. She advanced with lady-like grace toward him, when suddenly he stepped hastily past her, without taking any notice of her, and catching Minnie in his arms, he kissed her several times.

Mrs. Willoughby started back in horror.

Minnie did not resist, nor did she scream, or faint, or do any thing. She only looked a little confused, and managed to extricate herself, after which she took a seat as far away as she could, putting her sister between her and the Zouave. But the Zouave's joy was full, and he didn't appear to notice it. He settled himself in a chair, and laughed loud in his happiness.

"Only to think of it," said he. "Why, I had no more idea of your being here, Minnie, than *Victory*. Well, here you see me. Only been here a couple of months or so. You got my last favor, of course? And ain't you regular knocked up to see me a Baron? Yes, a Baron—a real, live Baron! I'll tell you all about it. You see I was here two or three years ago—the time of Mentana—and fought on the Pope's side. Odd thing, too, wasn't it, for an American? But so it was. Well, they promoted me, and wanted me to stay. But I couldn't fix it. I had business off home, and was on my way there the time of the shipwreck. Well, I've been dodgin' all round every where since then, but never forgettin' little Min, mind you, and at last I found myself here, all right. I'd been speculatin' in wines and raisins, and just dropped in here to take pot-luck with some old Zouave friends, when, darn me! if they didn't make me stay. It seems there's squally times ahead. They wanted a live man. They knew I was that live man. They offered me any thing I wanted. They offered me the title of Baron Atramonte. That knocked me, I tell you. Says I, I'm your man. So now you see me

Baron Atramont
aves, ready to g
fonder than ever
what, I ain't a bi
The men think
the shape of a c
When I'm in Ro
and so I let fly
and then. Why,
whole 'National
given them Marce
tus's to the Roma
dead body. I t
Catiline, but I cor
You know it, of co
know.

"Well, Min, ho
"This *is* jolly; and
in you—darn me
regularly struck up
of me as a Baron, b
come all the way he
look stunning! Y
lady? You haven't
The Baron rose,

"CATCHING MINNIE IN HIS ARMS, HE KISSED HER SEVERAL TIMES."

Baron Atramonte, captain in the Papal Zouaves, ready to go where glory waits me—but fonder than ever of little Min. Oh, I tell you what, I ain't a bit of a brag, but I'm *some* here. The men think I'm a little the tallest lot in the shape of a commander they ever *did* see. When I'm in Rome I do as the Romans do, and so I let fly at them a speech every now and then. Why, I've gone through nearly the whole 'National Speaker' by this time. I've given them Marcellus's speech to the mob, Brutus's to the Romans, and Antony's over Cæsar's dead body. I tried a bit of Cicero against Catiline, but I couldn't remember it very well. You know it, of course. *Quousque tandem*, you know.

"Well, Min, how goes it?" he continued. "This *is* jolly; and, what's more, it's real good to see you—darn me if it ain't! I knew you'd be regularly struck up all of a heap when you heard of me as a Baron, but I really didn't think you'd come all the way here to see me. And you do look stunning! You do beat all! And this lady? You haven't introduced me, you know."

The Baron rose, and looked expectantly at Mrs. Willoughby, and then at Minnie. The latter faltered forth some words, among which the Baron caught the names Mrs. Willoughby and Rufus K. Gunn, the latter name pronounced, with the middle initial and all, in a queer, prim way.

"Mrs. Willoughby—ah!—Min's sister, I presume. Well, I'm pleased to see you, ma'am. Do you know, ma'am, I have reason to remember your name? It's associated with the brightest hours of my life. It was in your parlor, ma'am, that I first obtained Min's promise of her hand. Your hand, madam."

And, stooping down, he grasped Mrs. Willoughby's hand, which was not extended, and wrung it so hard that she actually gave a little shriek.

"For my part, ma'am," he continued, "I'm not ashamed of my name—not a mite. It's a good, honest name; but being as the Holy Father's gone and made me a noble, I prefer being addressed by my title. All Americans are above titles. They despise them. But being in Rome, you see, we must do as the Romans do; and so you needn't know me as Rufus

K. Gunn, but as the Baron Atramonte. As for you, Min—you and I won't stand on ceremony—you may call me 'Roof,' or any other name you fancy. I would suggest some pet name—something a little loving, you know."

In the midst of all this, which was poured forth with extreme volubility, the servant came and handed a card.

"Count Girasole."

"HAWBURY, AS I'M A LIVING SINNER!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE AMERICAN BARON.

At any other time Mrs. Willoughby would perhaps have manœuvred Minnie out of the room; but on the present occasion the advent of the Italian was an inexpressible relief. Mrs. Willoughby was not prepared for a scene like this. The manners, the language, and the acts of Rufus K. Gunn had filled her with simple horror. She was actually bewildered, and her presence of mind was utterly gone. As for Minnie, she was quite helpless, and sat, looking frightened. The Baron Atramonte might have been one of the excellent of the earth—he might have been brave and loyal and just and true and tender, but his manner was one to which they were unaccustomed, and consequently Mrs. Willoughby was quite overcome.

The arrival of Girasole, therefore, was greeted by her with joy. She at once rose to meet him, and could not help infusing into her greeting a warmth which she had never shown him before. Girasole's handsome eyes sparkled with delight, and when Mrs. Willoughby pointedly made way for him to seat himself next to Minnie his cup of joy was full. Mrs. Willoughby's only idea at that moment was to throw some obstacle between Minnie and that "dreadful person" who claimed her as his own, and had taken such shocking liberties. She did not know that Girasole was in Rome, and now accepted his arrival at that opportune moment as something little less than providential.

And now, actuated still by the idea of throwing further obstacles between Minnie and the Baron, she herself went over to the latter, and began a series of polite remarks about the weather and about Rome; while Girasole, eager to avail himself of his unexpected privilege, conversed with Minnie in a low voice in his broken English.

This arrangement was certainly not very agreeable to the Baron. His flow of spirits seemed to be checked at once, and his volubility ceased. He made only monosyllabic answers to Mrs. Willoughby's remarks, and his eyes kept wandering over beyond her to Minnie, and scrutinizing the Italian who was thus monopolizing her at the very moment when he was beginning to have a "realizing sense" of her presence. He looked puzzled. He could not understand it at all. He felt that some wrong was done by somebody. He fell into an ungracious mood. He hated the Italian who had thus come between him and his happiness, and who chatted with Minnie, in his abominable broken English, just like an old acquaintance. He couldn't understand it. He felt an unpleasant restraint thrown over him, and began to meditate a departure, and a call at some more favorable time later in the evening. But he wanted to have a few more words with "Min," and so he tried to "sit out" the Italian.

But the Italian was as determined as the American. It was the first chance that he had had to get a word with Minnie since he was in Milan, and he was eager to avail himself of it. Mrs. Willoughby, on her part, having thus discomfited the Baron, was not unmindful of the other danger; so she moved her seat to a position near enough to overlook and check Girasole, and then resumed those formal, chilling, heartless, but perfectly polite remarks which she had been administering to the Baron since Girasole's arrival.

At length Mrs. Willoughby began to be dreadfully bored, and groaned in spirit over the situation in which Minnie had placed herself, and racked her brains to find some way of retreat from these two determined lovers, who thus set at naught the usages of society for their own convenience. She grew indignant. She wondered if they would *ever* go. She wondered if it were not possible to engage the Count and the Baron in a conversation by themselves, and, under cover of it, withdraw. Finally she began to think whether she would not be justified in being rude to them, since they were so inconsiderate. She thought over this, and was rapidly coming to the decision that some act of rudeness was her only hope; when, to her immense relief, the servant entered and announced Lord Hawbury.

The entrance of the welcome guest into the room where the unwelcome ones were seated was to Mrs. Willoughby like light in a dark place. To Minnie also it brought immense relief in her difficult position. The ladies rose, and were about to greet the new-comer, when, to their amazement, the Baron sprang forward, caught Lord Hawbury's hand, and wrung it over and over again with the most astonishing vehemence.

"Hawbury, as I'm a living sinner! Thunderation! Where did you come from? Good again! Darn it all, Hawbury, this is real good! And how well you look! *How* are you? All right, and right side up? Who'd have thought it? It ain't you, really, now, is it? Darn me if I ever was so astonished in my life! You're the last man I'd have expected. Yes, *Sir*. You may bet high on that."

"Ah, really," said Hawbury, "my dear fellow! Flattered, I'm sure. And how goes it with you? Deuced odd place to find you, old boy. And I'm deuced glad to see you, you know, and all that sort of thing."

And he wrung the Baron's hand quite as heartily as the other wrung his; and the expression on his face was of as much cordiality and pleasure as that upon the face of the other. Then Hawbury greeted the ladies, and apologized by stating that the Baron was a very old and tried friend, whom he had not seen for years; which intelligence surprised Mrs. Willoughby greatly, and brought a faint ray of something like peace to poor Minnie.

The ladies were not imprisoned much longer. Girasole threw a black look at Lord Hawbury, and retreated. After a few moments' chat Hawbury also retired, and made the Baron go with him. And the Baron went without any urging. He insisted, however, on shaking hands heartily with both of the ladies, especially Minnie, whose poor little hand he nearly crushed into a pulp; and to the latter he whispered the consoling assurance that he would come to see her on the following day. After which he followed his friend out.

Then he took Hawbury over to his own quarters, and Hawbury made himself very much at home in a rocking-chair, which the Baron regarded as the pride and joy and glory of his room.

"By Jove!" cried Hawbury. "This is deuced odd, do you know, old chap; and I can't imagine how the mischief you got here!"

This led to long explanations, and a long conversation, which was protracted far into the night, to the immense enjoyment of both of the friends.

The Baron was, as Lord Hawbury had said, an old friend. He had become acquainted with him many years before upon the prairies of America, near the Rocky Mountains. The Baron had rescued him from Indians, by whom he had been entrapped, and the two friends had wandered far over those regions, enduring perils, fighting enemies, and roughing it in general. This rough life had made each one's better nature visible to the other, and had led to the formation of a friendship full of mutual appreciation of the other's best qualities. Now it is just possible that if they had not known one another, Hawbury might have thought the Baron a boor, and the Baron might have called Hawbury a "thundering snob;" but as it was, the possible boor and the possible snob each thought the other one of the finest fellows in the world.

"But you're not a Roman Catholic," said Hawbury, as the Baron explained his position among the Zouaves.

"What's the odds? All's fish that comes to their net. To get an office in the Church may require a profession of faith, but we're not so particular in the army. I take the oath, and they let me go. Besides, I have Roman Catholic leanings."

"Roman Catholic leanings?"

"Yes; I like the Pope. He's a fine man, Sir—a fine man. I regard that man more like a father than any thing else. There isn't one of us but would lay down our lives for that old gentleman."

"But you never go to confession, and you're not a member of the Church."

"No; but then I'm a member of the army, and I have long chats with some of the English-speaking priests. There are some first-rate fellows among them, too. Yes, Sir."

"I don't see much of a leaning in all that."

"Leaning? Why, it's all leaning. Why, look here. I remember the time when I was a grim, true-blue Puritan. Well, I ain't that now. I used to think the Pope was the Beast of the Apocalypse. Well, now I think he's the finest old gentleman I ever saw. I didn't use to go to Catholic chapel. Well, now I'm there often, and I rather kind o' like it. Besides, I'm ready to argue with them all day and all night, and what more can they expect from a fighting man?

"You see, after our war I got my hand in, and couldn't stop fighting. The Indians wouldn't do—too much throat-cutting and savagery. So I came over here, took a fancy to the Pope, enlisted, was at Mentana, fit there, got promoted, went home, couldn't stand it, and here I am, back again; though how long I'm going to be here is more'n I can tell. The fact is, I feel kind of onsettled."

"Why so?"

"Oh, it's an aggravating place, at the best."

"How?"

"Why, there's such an everlasting waste of resources—such tarnation bad management. Fact is, I've noted that it's always the case wherever you trust ministers to do business. They're sure to make a mess of it. I've known lots of cases. Why, that's always the way with us. Look at our stock-companies of any kind, our religious societies, and our publishing houses—wherever they get a ministerial committee, the whole concern goes to blazes. I *know* that.

Yes, *Sir*. Now that's the case here. Here's a fine country. Why, round this here city there's a country, Sir, that, if properly managed, might beat any of our prairies—and look at it.

"Then, again, they complain of poverty. Why, I can tell you, from my own observation, that they've got enough capital locked up, lying useless, in this here city, to regenerate it all, and put it on its feet. This capital wants to be utilized. It's been lying too long without paying interest. It's time that it stopped. Why, I tell you what it is, if they were to sell out what they have here lying idle, and realize, they'd get enough money to form an endowment fund for the Pope and his court so big that his Holiness and every official in the place might get salaries all round out of the interest that would enable them to live like—well, I was going to say like princes, but there's a lot of princes in Rome that live so shabby that the comparison ain't worth nothing.

"Why, see here, now," continued the Baron, warming with his theme, which seemed to be a congenial one; "just look here; see the position of the Roman court. They can actually levy [illegible] the whole world. Voluntary contributions, [illegible], are a wonderful power. Think of our missionary societies—our Sabbath-school organizations in the States. Think of the wealth, the activity, and the action of all our great charitable, philanthropic, and religious bodies. What supports them all? Voluntary contributions. Now what I mean to say is this—I mean to say that if a proper organization was arranged here, they could get annual receipts from the whole round globe that would make the Pope the richest man on it. Why, in that case Rothschild wouldn't be a circumstance. The Pope might go into banking himself, and control the markets of the world. But no. There's a lot of ministers here, and they haven't any head for it. I wish they'd give me a chance. I'd make things spin.

"Then, again, they've got other things here that's ruining them. There's too much repression, and that don't do for the immortal mind. My idea is that every man was created free and equal, and has a right to do just as he darn pleases; but you can't beat that into the heads of the governing class here. No, Sir. The fact is, what Rome wants is a republic. It 'll come, too, some day. The great mistake of his Holiness's life is that he didn't put himself at the head of the movement in '48. He had the chance, but he got frightened, and backed down. Whereas if he had been a real, live Yankee, now—if he had been like some of our Western parsons—he'd have put himself on the tiptop of the highest wave, and gone in. Why, he could have had all Italy at his right hand by this time, instead of having it all against him. There's where he made his little mistake. If I were Pope I'd fight the enemy with their own weapons. I'd accept the situation. I'd go in head over heels for a republic. I'd have Rome the capital, myself president, Garibaldi commander-in-chief, Mazzini secretary of state—a man, Sir, that can lick even Bill Seward himself in a regular, old-fashioned, tonguey, subtile, diplomatic note." And in that case, with a few live men at the head of affairs, where would Victor Emanuel be? Emphatically, nowhere!

"Why, Sir," continued the Baron, "I'd engage to take this city as it is, and the office of Pope, and run the whole Roman Catholic Church, till it knocked out all opposition by the simple and natural process of absorbing all opponents. We want a republic here in Rome. We want freedom, Sir. Where is the Church making its greatest triumphs to-day? In the States, Sir. If the Catholic Church made itself free and liberal and go-ahead; if it kept up with the times; if it was imbued with the spirit of progress, and pitched aside all old-fashioned traditions—why, I tell you, Sir, it would be a little the tallest organization on this green globe of ours. Yes, *Sir!*"

While Hawbury and the Baron were thus engaged in high discourse, Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie were engaged in discourses of a less elevated but more engrossing character.

After the ladies had escaped they went up stairs. Lady Dalrymple had retired some time before to her own room, and they had the apartment to themselves. Minnie flung herself into a chair and looked bewildered; Mrs. Willoughby took another chair opposite, and said nothing for a long time.

"Well," said Minnie at last, "you needn't be so cross, Kitty; I didn't bring him here."

"Cross!" said her sister; "I'm not cross."

"Well, you're showing temper, at any rate; and you know you are, and I think it very unkind in you, when I have so much to trouble me."

"Why, really, Minnie darling, I don't know what to say."

"Well, why don't you tell me what you think of him, and all that sort of thing? You *might*, you know."

"Think of him!" repeated Mrs. Willoughby, elevating her eyebrows.

"Yes, think of him; and you needn't go and make faces about him, at any rate."

"Did I make faces? Well, dear," said Mrs. Willoughby, patiently, "I'll tell you what I think of him. I'm afraid of him."

"Well, then," said Minnie, in a tone of triumph, "now you know how I feel. Suppose he saved your life, and then came in his awfully boisterous way to see you; and got you alone, and began that way, and really quite overwhelmed you, you know; and then, when you were really almost stunned, suppose he went and proposed to you? Now, then!"

And Minnie ended this question with the air of one who could not be answered, and knew it.

"He's awful—perfectly awful!" said Mrs. Willoughby. "And the way he treated you! It was *so* shocking."

"I know; and that's just the horrid way he

"LOOK AT THE MAN!"

always does," said Minnie, in a plaintive tone. "I'm sure *I* don't know what to do with him. And then he's Lord Hawbury's friend. So what *are* we to do?"

"I don't know, unless we leave Rome at once."

"But I don't *want* to leave Rome," said Minnie. "I hate being chased away from places by people—and they'd be sure to follow me, you know—and I don't know what to do. And oh, Kitty darling, I've just thought of something. It would be so nice. What do you think of it?"

"What is it?"

"Why, this. You know the Pope?"

"No, I don't."

"Oh, well, you've seen him, you know."

"Yes; but what has he got to do with it?"

"Why, I'll get you to take me, and I'll go to him, and tell him all about it, and about all these horrid men; and I'll ask him if he can't do something or other to help me. They have dispensations and things, you know, that the Pope gives; and I want him to let me dispense with these awful people."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Willoughby.

"I don't see any nonsense in it at all. I'm in earnest," said Minnie; "and I think it's a great shame."

"Nonsense!" said her sister again; "the only thing is for you to stay in your room."

"But I don't want to stay in my room, and I can't."

"Oh dear! what can I do with this child?" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, whose patience was giving way.

Upon this Minnie went over and kissed her, and begged to be forgiven; and offered to do any thing that darling Kitty wanted her to do.

After this they talked a good deal over their difficulty, but without being able to see their way out of it more clearly.

That evening they were walking up and down the balcony of the house. It was a quadrangular edifice, and they had a suit of rooms on the second and third stories. They were on the balcony of the third story, which looked down into the court-yard below. A fountain was in the middle of this, and the moon was shining brightly.

The ladies were standing looking down, when Minnie gently touched her sister's arm, and whispered,

"Look at the man!"

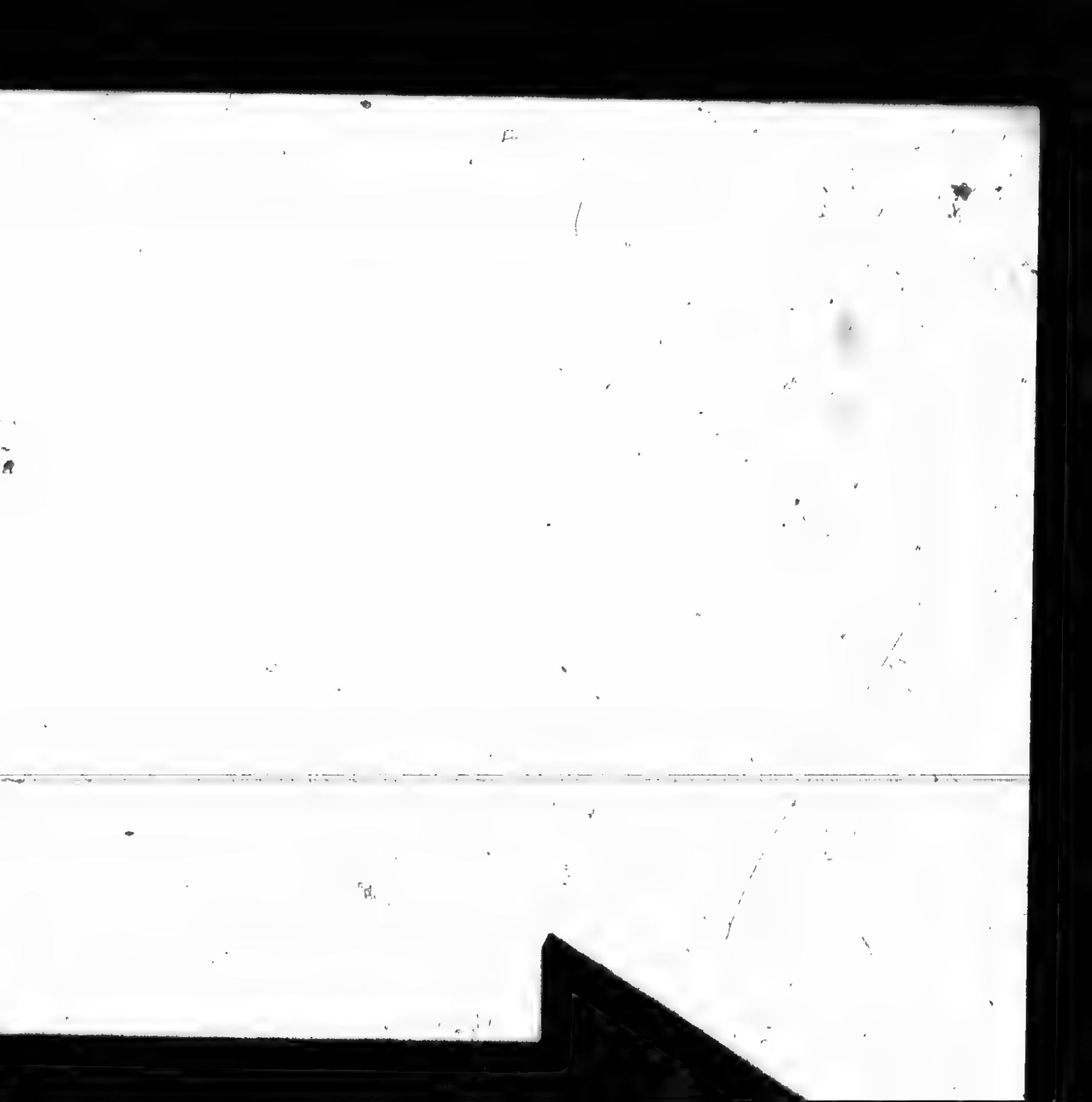
"Where?"

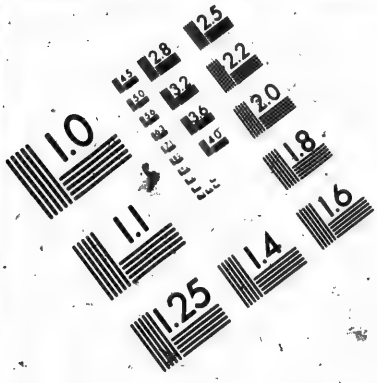
"By the fountain."

Mrs. Willoughby looked, and saw the face of a man who was standing on the other side of the fountain. His head rose above it, and his face was turned toward them. He evidently did not know that he was seen, but was watching the ladies, thinking that he himself was unobserved. The moment that Mrs. Willoughby looked at the face she recognized it.

"Come in," said she to Minnie. And drawing her sister after her, she went into the house.

"I knew the face; didn't you, Kitty dear?" said Minnie. "It's so easy to tell it. It was Scone Dacres. But what in the world does he want? Oh dear! I hope he won't bother me."





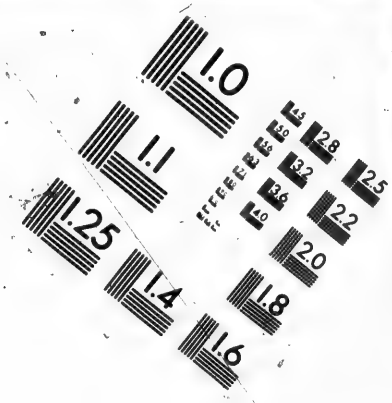
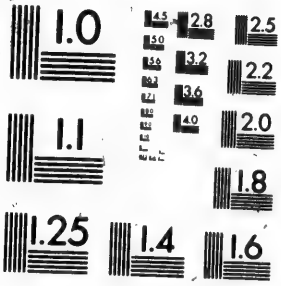
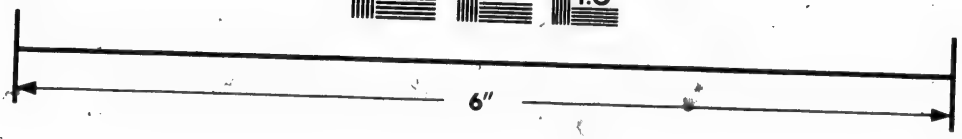
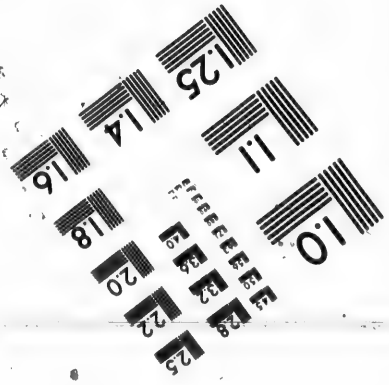


IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (MT-3)







Photographic Sciences Corporation

23 WEST MAIN STREET
WEBSTER, N.Y. 14580
(716) 872-4503

CHAPTER XVI.

THE INTRUDER.

JUDGING from the Baron's own words, it will be perceived that his comprehension of the situation was a little different from the actual fact. His idea was that his last letter had been received by Minnie in England, whereupon she had been seized with such an ungovernable longing to see him that she at once set out for Rome. She had not sent him any message, for she wished to surprise him. She had done so effectually. He was not merely surprised; he was overwhelmed, overjoyed, intoxicated with joy. This was indeed kind, he thought—the true part of a fond girl, who thus cast aside all silly scruples, and followed the dictates of her own noble and loving heart.

Now the fact that he had made a partial failure of his first visit to his charmer did not in the slightest degree disconcert him. He was naturally joyous, hilarious, and sanguine. His courage never faltered, nor could the brightness of his soul be easily dimmed. A disappointment on one day gave him but little trouble. It was quickly thrown off, and then his buoyant spirit looked forward for better fortune on the next day. The little disappointment which he had did not, therefore, prevent him from letting his reason feast and his soul flow with Lord Hawbury; nor, when that festive season was over, did it prevent him from indulging in the brightest anticipations for the following day.

On the afternoon of that day, then, the Baron directed his steps toward the hotel where his charmer resided, his heart beating high, and the generous blood mantling his cheek, and all that sort of thing. But the Baron was not alone. He had a companion, and this companion was an acquaintance whom he had made that morning. This companion was very tall, very thin, very sallow, with long, straggling locks of rusty black hair, white neck-tie, and a suit of rather seedy black clothes. In fact, it was the very stranger who had been arrested almost under his eyes as a Garibaldian. His case had come under the notice of the Baron, who had visited him, and found him not to be a Garibaldian at all, but a fellow-countryman in distress—in short, no less a person than the Reverend Saul Tozer, an esteemed clergyman, who had been traveling through Europe for the benefit of his health and the enlargement of his knowledge. This fellow-countryman in distress had at once been released by the Baron's influence; and, not content with giving him his liberty, he determined to take him under his protection, and offered to introduce him to society; all of which generous offices were fully appreciated by the grateful clergyman.

The Baron's steps were first directed toward the place above mentioned, and the Reverend Saul accompanied him. On reaching it he knocked, and asked for Miss Fay.

"Not at home," was the reply.

"Oh, well," said he, "I'll go in and wait till she comes home. Come along, parson, and make yourself quite at home. Oh, never mind, young man," he continued to the servant; "I know the way. Come along, parson." And with these words he led the way into the reception-room, in which he had been before.

An elderly lady was seated there whom the Baron recognized as having seen before. It was Lady Dalrymple, whose name was, of course, unknown to him, since he had only exchanged a few words on his former visit. But as he was naturally chivalrous, and as he was bent on making friends with all in the house, and as he was also in a glorious state of good-will to the entire human race, he at once advanced to the lady and made a low bow.

"How do you do, ma'am?"

Lady Dalrymple bowed good-naturedly, for she was good-natured to a fault.

"I suppose you remember me, ma'am," said the Baron, in rather a loud voice; for, as the lady was elderly, he had a vague idea that she was deaf—which impression, I may mention, was altogether unfounded—"I suppose you remember me, ma'am? But I haven't had the pleasure of a regular introduction to you; so we'll waive ceremony, if you choose, and I'll introduce myself. I'm the Baron Atramonte, and this is my very particular friend, the Reverend Saul Tozer."

"I'm happy to make your acquaintance," said Lady Dalrymple, with a smile, and not taking the Baron's offered hand—not, however, from pride, but simply from laziness—for she hated the bother, and didn't consider it good taste.

"I called here, ma'am," said the Baron, without noticing that Lady Dalrymple had not introduced *herself*—"I called here, ma'am, to see my young friend, Miss Minnie Fay. I'm very sorry that she ain't at home; but since I *am* here, I rather think I'll just set down and wait for her. I s'pose you couldn't tell me, ma'am, about how long it 'll be before she comes in?"

Lady Dalrymple hadn't any idea.

"All right," said the Baron; "the longer she keeps me waiting, the more welcome she'll be when she does come. That's all I've got to say."

So the Baron handed a chair to the Reverend Saul, and then selecting another for himself in a convenient position, he ensconced himself in it as snugly as possible, and sat in silence for a few minutes. Lady Dalrymple took no notice of him whatever, but appeared to be engrossed with some trifle of needle-work.

After about five minutes the Baron resumed the task of making himself agreeable.

He cleared his throat.

"Long in these parts, ma'am?" he asked.

"Not very long," said Lady Dalrymple, with her usual bland good-nature.

"A nice place this," continued the Baron.

"Yes."

"And do you keep your health, ma'am?" inquired the Baron, with some anxiety.

"Thanks," said Lady Dalrymple; which observation set the Baron's mind wondering what she meant by that.

"Pray, ma'am," said he, after a pause, "might you be any relation to a young lady friend of mine that's staying here named Minnie Fay?"

"A little," said Lady Dalrymple; which remark set the Baron again wondering. And he was about to return to the charge with another and more direct question, when his attention was arrested by the sound of footsteps on the stairs; so he sat bolt upright, and stared hard at the door. There was the rustle of a dress. The Baron rose. So did the Reverend Saul Tozer. The lady appeared. It was not Minnie. It was Mrs. Willoughby.

Now during the Baron's visit there had been some excitement up stairs. The ladies had told the servants that they were not at home to any callers that day. They had found with consternation how carelessly the Baron had brushed aside their little cobweb regulation, and had heard his voice as he strove to keep up an easy conversation with their aunt. Whereupon an earnest debate arose. They felt that it was not fair to leave their aunt alone with the Baron, and that one of them should go to the rescue. To Mrs. Willoughby's amazement, Minnie was anxious to go. To this she utterly objected. Minnie insisted, and Mrs. Willoughby was in despair. In vain she reproached that most whimsical of young ladies. In vain she reminded her of the Baron's rudeness on a former occasion. Minnie simply reminded her that the Baron had saved her life. At last Mrs. Willoughby actually had to resort to entreaties, and thus she persuaded Minnie not to go down. So she went down herself, but in fear and trembling, for she did not know at what moment her voluble and utterly unreliable sister might take it into her head to follow her.

The Baron, who had risen, full of expectation, stood looking at her, full of disappointment, which was very strongly marked on his face. Then he recollected that Minnie was "not at home," and that he must wait till she did get home. This thought, and the hope that he would not now have long to wait, brought back his friendly glow, and his calm and his peace and his good-will toward the whole human race, including the ladies in the room. He therefore bowed very low, and, advancing, he made an effort to shake hands; but Mrs. Willoughby had already known the dread pressure which the Baron gave, and evaded him by a polite bow. Thereupon the Baron introduced the Reverend Saul Tozer.

The Baron took out his watch, looked at it, frowned, coughed, put it back, and then drummed with his fingers on the arm of the chair.

"Will it be long, ma'am," asked the Baron, "before Minnie gets back?"

"She is not out," said Mrs. Willoughby.

"Not out?"

"No."

"Why, the thundering fool of a servant went and told me that she was not at home!"

"She is at home," said Mrs. Willoughby, sweetly.

"What! at home!" cried the Baron. "And does she know *I'm* here?"

"She does."

"Then why in thunder don't she come down?" cried the Baron, wonderingly.

"Because she is indisposed."

"Indisposed?"

"Yes."

This was the information which Mrs. Willoughby had decided to give to the Baron. Minnie had stipulated that his feelings should not be hurt; and this seemed to her to be the easiest mode of dealing with him.

"Indisposed!" cried the Baron.

"Yes."

"Oh dear! Oh, I hope, ma'am—I do hope, ma'am, that she ain't very bad. Is it any thing serious—or what?"

"Not *very* serious; she has to keep her room, though."

"She ain't sick abed, I hope?"

"Oh no—not so bad as that!"

"Oh dear! it's all *me*, I know. *I'm* to blame. She made this journey—the poor little pet!—just to see me; and the fatigue and the excitement have all been too much. Oh, I might have known it! Oh, I remember now how pale she looked yesterday! Oh dear! what 'll I do if any thing happens to her? Oh, do tell me—is she better?—did she pass a good night?—does she suffer any pain?—can I do any thing for her?—will you take a little message from me to her?"

"She is quite easy now, thanks," said Mrs. Willoughby; "but we have to keep her perfectly quiet; the slightest excitement may be dangerous."

Meanwhile the Reverend Saul had become wearied with sitting dumb, and began to look around for some suitable means of taking part in the conversation. As the Baron had introduced him to society, he felt that it was his duty to take some part so as to assert himself both as a man, a scholar, and a clergyman. So, as he found the Baron was monopolizing Mrs. Willoughby, he gradually edged over till he came within ear-shot of Lady Dalrymple, and then began to work his way toward a conversation.

"This, ma'am," he began, "is truly an interesting spot."

Lady Dalrymple bowed.

"Yes, ma'am. I've been for the past few days surveying the ruins of antiquity. It is truly a soul-stirring spectacle."

"So I have heard," remarked Lady Dalrymple, cheerfully.

"Every thing around us, ma'am," continued the Reverend Saul, in a dismal voice, "is subject to dissolution, or is actually dissolving. How forcible air the words of the Psalmist: 'Our days air as the grass, or like the morn-

ing flower; when blasting winds sweep o'er the vale, they wither in an hour.' Yes, ma'am, I have this week stood in the Roman Forum. The Coliseum, also, ma'am, is a wonderful place. It was built by the Flavian emperors, and when completed could hold eighty thousand spectators seated, with about twenty thousand standing. In hot weather these spectators were protected from the rays of the sun by means of awnings. It is a mighty fabric, ma'am!"

"I should think so," said Lady Dalrymple.

"The arch of Titus, ma'am, is a fine ruin. It was originally built by the emperor of that name to commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem. The arch of Septimius Severus was built by the Emperor of that name, and the arch of Constantine was built by the emperor of *that* name. They are all very remarkable structures."

"I'm charmed to hear you say so."

"It's true, ma'am; but let me add, ma'am, that the ruins of this ancient city do not offer to my eyes a spectacle half so melancholy as the great moral ruin which is presented by the modern city. For, ma'am, when I look around, what do I see? I behold the Babylon of the Apocalypse! Pray, ma'am, have you ever reflected much on that?"

"Not to any great extent," said Lady Dalrymple, who now began to feel bored, and so arose to her feet. The Reverend Saul Tozer was just getting on a full head of conversational steam, and was just fairly under way, when this sad and chilling occurrence took place. She rose and bowed to the gentlemen, and began to retreat.

All this time the Baron had been pouring forth to Mrs. Willoughby his excited interrogatories about Minnie's health, and had asked her to take a message. This Mrs. Willoughby refused at first.

"Oh no!" said she; "it will really disturb her too much. What she wants most is perfect quiet. Her health is really *very* delicate, and I am *excessively* anxious about her."

"But does she—does she—is she—can she walk about her own room?" stammered the Baron.

"A little," said Mrs. Willoughby. "Oh, I hope in a few weeks she may be able to come down. But the very *greatest* care and quiet are needed, for she is in such a *very* delicate state that we watch her night and day."

"A few weeks!" echoed the Baron, in dismay. "Watch her night and day!"

"Oh, you know, it is the only chance for her recovery. She is *so* delicate."

The Baron looked at Mrs. Willoughby with a pale face, upon which there was real suffering and real misery.

"Can't I do something?" he gasped. "Won't you take a message to her? It ought to do her good. Perhaps she thinks I'm neglecting her. Perhaps she thinks I ain't here enough. Tell her I'm ready to give up my office, and even my title of nobility, and come and live here, if it 'll be any comfort to her."

"Oh, really, Sir, you *quite* mistake her," said Mrs. Willoughby. "It has no reference to you whatever. It's a nervous affection, accompanied with general debility and neuralgia."

"Oh no, you don't know her," said the Baron, incredulously. "I *know* her. I know what it is. But she walks, don't she?"

"Yes, a little—just across the room; still, even that is too much. She is *very, very* weak, and must be *quite* kept free from excitement. Even the excitement of your visits is bad for her. Her pulse is—is—always—accelerated—and—she—I— Oh, dear me!"

While Mrs. Willoughby had been making up this last sentence she was startled by a rustling on the stairs. It was the rustle of a female's dress. An awful thought occurred to her, which distracted her, and confused her in the middle of her sentence, and made her scarce able to articulate her words. And as she spoke them the rustle drew nearer, and she heard the sound of feet descending the stairs, until at last the footsteps approached the door, and Mrs. Willoughby, to her utter horror, saw Minnie herself.

Now as to the Baron, in the course of his animated conversation with Mrs. Willoughby, and in his excited entreaties to her to carry a message up to the invalid, he had turned round with his back to the door. It was about the time that Lady Dalrymple had begun to beat a retreat. As she advanced the B[illegible]w her, and, with his usual politeness, [illegible]ver so far to one side, bowing low as he [illegible] Lady Dalrymple passed, the Baron raised himself, and as Mrs. Willoughby was yet speaking, and had just reached the exclamation which concluded her last remark, he was astounded by the sudden appearance of Minnie herself at the door.

The effect of this sudden appearance was overwhelming. Mrs. Willoughby stood thunder-struck, and the Baron utterly bewildered. The latter recovered his faculties first. It was just as Lady Dalrymple was passing out. With a bound he sprang toward Minnie, and caught her in his arms, uttering a series of inarticulate cries.

"Oh, Min! and you did come down, did you? And you couldn't stay up there, could you? I wanted to send a message to you. Poor little Min! you're so weak. Is it anything serious? Oh, my darling little Min! But sit down on this here seat. Don't stand; you're too weak. Why didn't you send, and I'd have carried you down? But tell me now, honest, wasn't it *me* that brought this on? Never mind, I'll never leave you again."

This is the style which the gallant Baron adopted to express his sentiments concerning Minnie; and the result was that he succeeded in giving utterance to words that were quite as incoherent as any that Minnie herself, in her most rambling moods, had ever uttered.

The Baron now gave himself up to joy. He

took no notice of any body. He sat by Minnie's side on a sofa, and openly held her hand. The Reverend Saul Tozer looked on with an approving smile, and surveyed the scene like a father. Mrs. Willoughby's soul was on fire with indignation at Minnie's folly and the Baron's impudence. She was also indignant that her little conventional falsehobds had been suddenly disproved by the act of Minnie herself. Yet she did not know what to say, and so she went to a chair, and flung herself into it in fierce anger.

As for Minnie herself, she had come down to the Baron, and appeared rather to enjoy the situation. She talked about Rome and Naples, and asked him all about himself, and the Baron explained his whole situation down to the minutest detail. She was utterly indifferent to her sister. Once or twice the Baron made a move to go, but did not succeed. He finally settled himself down apparently for the rest of the day; but Mrs. Willoughby at last interposed. She walked forward. She took Minnie's hand, and spoke to her in a tone which she but seldom used.

"You shall *not* stay here any longer!" she cried. "Come."

And Minnie obeyed at once.

The Baron insisted on a tender adieu. Mrs. Willoughby stood by, with flashing eyes and heaving breast.

Minnie followed her up stairs in silence.

"You silly child!" she cried. "Are you mad? What made you come down? You broke your promise!"

"Well—well—I couldn't help it, and he is so deliciously rude; and do you know, Kitty dearest, I really begin to feel quite fond of him."

"Now listen, child. You shall never see him again."

"I don't see why not," whimpered Minnie.

"And I'm going to telegraph to papa. I wouldn't have the responsibility of you another week for the world."

"Now, Kitty, you're horrid."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BARON'S ASSAULTS.

On the eventful afternoon when the Baron had effected an entrance into the heart of the enemy's country, another caller had come there—one equally intent and equally determined, but not quite so aggressive. This was the Count Girasole. The same answer was given to him which had been given to the Baron, but with far different effect. The Baron had carelessly brushed the slight obstacle aside. To the Count it was an impenetrable barrier. It was a bitter disappointment, too; for he had been filled with the brightest hopes and expectations by the reception with which he had met on his last visit. That reception had made him believe that they had changed their sentiments and their attitude toward him, and that for the future he would be received in the same fashion. He had determined, therefore, to make the most of this favorable change, and so he at once repeated his call. This time, however, his hopes were crushed. What made it worse, he had seen the entrance of the Baron and the Reverend Saul, and knew by this that instead of being a favored mortal in the eyes of these ladies, he was really, in their estimation, placed below these comparative strangers. By the language of Lord Hawbury on his previous call, he knew that the acquaintance of the Baron with Mrs. Willoughby was but recent.

The disappointment of the Count filled him with rage, and revived all his old feelings and plans and projects. The Count was not one who could suffer in silence. He was a crafty, wily, subtle, scheming Italian, whose fertile brain was full of plans to achieve his desires, and who preferred to accomplish his aims by a tortuous path, rather than by a straight one. This repulse revived old projects, and he took his departure with several little schemes in his mind, some of which, at least, were destined to bear fruit afterward.

On the following day the Baron called once more. The ladies in the mean time had talked over the situation, but were unable to see what they were to do with a man who insisted on forcing his way into their house. Their treatment would have been easy enough if it had not been for Minnie. She insisted that they should not be unkind to him. He had saved her life, she said, and she could not treat him with rudeness. Lady Dalrymple was in despair, and Mrs. Willoughby at her wit's end, while Ethel, to whom the circumstance was made known, was roused by it from her sadness, and tried to remonstrate with Minnie. All her efforts, however, were as vain as those of her friends. Minnie could not be induced to take any decided stand. She insisted on seeing him whenever he called, on the ground that it would be unkind not to.

"And will you insist on seeing Girasole also?" asked Mrs. Willoughby.

"I don't know. I'm awfully sorry for him," said Minnie.

"Well, then, Captain Kirby will be here next. Of course you will see him?"

"I suppose so," said Minnie, resignedly.

"And how long do you think this sort of thing can go on? They'll meet, and blood will he shed."

"Oh dear! I'm afraid so."

"Then I'm not going to allow it. I've telegraphed to papa. He'll see whether you are going to have your own way or not."

"I'm sure I don't see what dear papa can do."

"He won't let you see those horrid men."

"He won't be cruel enough to lock me up in the house. I do wish he would come and take me away. I don't want them. They're all horrid."

"MIN, IT'S ME!"

"This last one—this Gunn—is the most terrible man I ever saw."

"Oh, Kitty dearest! How *can* you say so? Why, his rudeness and violence are perfectly irresistible. He's charming. He bullies one so deliciously."

Mrs. Willoughby at this turned away in despair.

Minnie's very peculiar situation was certainly one which required a speedy change. The forced entrance of the Baron had thrown consternation into the family. Ethel herself had been roused, and took a part in the debate. She began to see Minnie in a new light, and Hawbury's attention to her began to assume the appearance of a very mournful joke. To her mind Minnie was now the subject of desperate attention from five men.

Thus:

1. Lord Hawbury.
2. Count Girasole.
3. Scone Dacres.
4. Baron Atramonte.
5. Captain Kirby, of whom Mrs. Willoughby had just told her.

And of these, four had saved her life, and consequently had the strongest possible claims on her.

And the only satisfaction which Ethel could gain out of this was the thought that Hawbury, at least, had not saved Minnie's life.

And now to proceed.

The Baron called, as has been said, on the following day. This time he did not bring the Reverend Saul with him. He wished to see Minnie alone, and felt the presence of third persons to be rather unpleasant.

On reaching the place he was told, as before, that the ladies were not at home.

Now the Baron remembered that on the preceding day the servant had said the same, while all the time the ladies were home. He was charitably inclined to suppose that it was a mistake, and not a deliberate lie; and, as he was in a frame of good-will to mankind, he adopted this first theory.

"All right, young man," said he; "but as you lied yesterday—under a mistake—I prefer seeing for myself to-day."

So the Baron brushed by the servant, and went in. He entered the room. No one was there. He waited a little while, and thought. He was too impatient to wait long. He could not trust these lying servants. So he determined to try for himself. Her room was up stairs, somewhere in the story above.

So he went out of the room, and up the stairs, until his head was on a level with the floor of the story above. Then he called:

"*Min!*"

No answer.

"MIN!" in a louder voice.

No answer.

"MIN! it's ME!" still louder.

No answer.

"*MIN!*" a perfect yell.

At this last shout there was a response. One of the doors opened, and a lady made her appearance, while at two other doors appeared

two maids. The lady was young and beautiful, and her face was stern, and her dark eyes looked indignantly toward the Baron.

"Who are you?" she asked, abruptly; "and what do you want?"

"Me? I'm the Baron Atramonte; and I want Min. Don't you know where she is?"

"Who?"

"Min."

"Min?" asked the other, in amazement.

"Yes. My Min—Minnie, you know. Minnie Fay."

At this the lady looked at the Baron with utter horror.

"I want her."

"She's not at home," said the lady.

"Well, really, it's too bad. I must see her. Is she out?"

"Yes."

"Really? Honor bright now?"

The lady retired and shut the door.

"Well, darn it all, you needn't be so peppery," muttered the Baron. "I didn't say any thing. I only asked a civil question. Out, hey? Well, she must be this time. If she'd been in, she'd have made her appearance. Well, I'd best go out and hunt her up. They don't seem to me altogether so cordial as I'd like to have them. They're just a leetle too 'ristocratic."

With these observations to himself, the Baron descended the stairs, and made his way to the door. Here he threw an engaging smile upon the servant, and made a remark which set the other on the broad grin for the remainder of the day. After this the Baron took his departure.

The Baron this time went to some stables, and reappeared in a short time mounted upon a gallant steed, and careering down the Corso. In due time he reached the Piazza del Popolo, and then he ascended the Pincian Hill. Here he rode about for some time, and finally his perseverance was rewarded. He was looking down from the summit of the hill upon the Piazza below, when he caught sight of a barouche, in which were three ladies. One of these sat on the front seat, and her white face and short golden hair seemed to indicate to him the one he sought.

In an instant he put spurs to his horse, and rode down the hill as quick as possible, to the great alarm of the crowds who were going up and down. In a short time he had caught up with the carriage. He was right. It was the right one, and Minnie was there, together with Lady Dalrymple and Mrs. Willoughby. The ladies, on learning of his approach, exhibited no emotion. They were prepared for this, and resigned. They had determined that Minnie should have no more interviews with him indoors; and since they could not imprison her altogether, they would have to submit for the present to his advances. But they were rapidly becoming desperate.

Lord Hawbury was riding by the carriage as the Baron came up.

"Hallo!" said he to the former. "How do? and *how* are you all? Why, I've been hunting all over creation. Well, Minnie, how goes it? Feel lively? That's right. Keep out in the open air. Take all the exercise you can, and eat as hard as you can. You live too quiet as a general thing, and want to knock around more. But we'll fix all that, won't we, Min, before a month of Sundays?"

The advent of the Baron in this manner, and his familiar address to Minnie, filled Hawbury with amazement. He had been surprised at finding him with the ladies on the previous day, but there was nothing in his demeanor which was at all remarkable. Now, however, he noticed the very great familiarity of his tone and manner toward Minnie, and was naturally amazed. The Baron had not confided to him his secret, and he could not understand the cause of such intimacy between the representatives of such different classes. He therefore listened with inexpressible astonishment to the Baron's language, and to Minnie's artless replies.

Minnie was sitting on the front seat of the barouche, and was alone in that seat. As the gentlemen rode on each side of the carriage her face was turned toward them. Hawbury rode back, so that he was beside Lady Dalrymple; but the Baron rode forward, on the other side, so as to bring himself as near to Minnie as possible. The Baron was exceedingly happy. His happiness showed itself in the flush of his face, in the glow of his eyes, and in the general exuberance and all-embracing swell of his manner. His voice was loud, his gestures demonstrative, and his remarks were addressed by turns to each one in the company. The others soon gave up the attempt to talk, and left it all to the Baron. Lady Dalrymple and Mrs. Willoughby exchanged glances of despair. Hawbury still looked on in surprise, while Minnie remained perfectly calm, perfectly self-possessed, and conversed with her usual simplicity.

As the party thus rode on they met a horseman, who threw a rapid glance over all of them. It was Girasole. The ladies bowed, and Mrs. Willoughby wished that he had come a little before, so that he could have taken the place beside the carriage where the Baron now was. But the place was now appropriated, and there was no chance for the Count. Girasole threw a dark look over them, which rested more particularly on Hawbury. Hawbury nodded lightly at the Count, and didn't appear to take any further notice of him. All this took up but a few moments, and the Count passed on.

Shortly after they met another horseman. He sat erect, pale, sad, with a solemn, earnest glow in his melancholy eyes. Minnie's back was turned toward him, so that she could not see his face, but his eyes were fixed upon Mrs. Willoughby. She looked back at him and bowed, as did also Lady Dalrymple. He took off his hat, and the carriage rolled past. Then he turned and looked after it, bareheaded, and Minnie caught sight of him, and smiled and

bowed. And then in a few moments more the crowd swallowed up Scone Dacres.

The Baron thus enjoyed himself in a large, exuberant fashion, and monopolized the conversation in a large, exuberant way. He outdid himself. He confided to the ladies his plans for the regeneration of the Roman Church and the Roman State. He told stories of his adventures in the Rocky Mountains. He mentioned the state of his finances, and his prospects for the future. He was as open, as free, and as communicative as if he had been at home, with fond sisters and admiring brothers around him. The ladies were disgusted at it all; and by the ladies I mean only Mrs. Willoughby and Lady Dalrymple. For Minnie was not—she actually listened in delight. It was not conventional. Very well. Neither was the Baron. And for that matter, neither was she. He was a child of nature. So was she. His rudeness, his aggressiveness, his noise, his talkativeness, his egotism, his confidences about himself—all these did not make him so very disagreeable to her as to her sister and aunt.

So Minnie treated the Baron with the utmost complaisance, and Hawbury was surprised, and Mrs. Willoughby and Lady Dalrymple were disgusted; but the Baron was delighted, and his soul was filled with perfect joy. Too soon for him was this drive over. But the end came, and they reached the hotel. Hawbury left them, but the Baron lingered. The spot was too sweet, the charm too dear—he could not tear himself away.

In fact, he actually followed the ladies into the house.

"I think I'll just make myself comfortable in here, Min, till you come down," said the Baron. And with these words he walked into the reception-room, where he selected a place on a sofa, and composed himself to wait patiently for Minnie to come down.

So he waited, and waited, and waited—but Minnie did not come. At last he grew impatient. He walked out, and up the stairs, and listened.

He heard ladies' voices.

He spoke.

"*Min!*"

No answer.

"MIN!" louder.

No answer.

"MIN! HALLO-O-O-O!"

No answer.

"*MIN!*" a perfect shout.

At this a door was opened violently, and Mrs. Willoughby walked out. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes glanced fire.

"Sir," she said, "this is intolerable! You must be intoxicated. Go away at once, or I shall certainly have you turned out of the house."

And saying this she went back, shut the door, and locked it.

The Baron was thunder-struck. He had never been treated so in his life. He was cut to the heart. His feelings were deeply wounded.

"Darn it!" he muttered. "What's all this for? I ain't been doing any thing."

He walked out very thoughtfully. He couldn't understand it at all. He was troubled for some time. But at last his buoyant spirit rose superior to this temporary depression. To-morrow would explain all, he thought. Yes, to-morrow would make it all right. To-morrow he would see Min, and get her to tell him what in thunder the row was. She'd have to tell, for he could never find out. So he made up his mind to keep his soul in patience.

That evening Hawbury was over at the Baron's quarters, by special invitation, and the Baron decided to ask his advice. So in the course of the evening, while in the full, easy, and confidential mood that arises out of social intercourse, he told Hawbury his whole story—beginning with the account of his first meeting with Minnie, and his rescue of her, and her acceptance of him, down to this very day, when he had been so terribly snubbed by Mrs. Willoughby. To all this Hawbury listened in amazement. It was completely new to him. He wondered particularly to find another man who had saved the life of this quiet, timid little girl.

The Baron asked his advice, but Hawbury declined giving any. He said he couldn't advise any man in a love-affair. Every man must trust to himself. No one's advice could be of any avail. Hawbury, in fact, was puzzled, but he said the best he could. The Baron himself was fully of Hawbury's opinion. He swore that it was truth, and declared the man that followed another's advice in a love-affair was a "darned fool that didn't deserve to win his gal."

There followed a general conversation on things of a different kind. The Baron again discoursed on church and state. He then exhibited some curiosities. Among other things a skull. He used it to hold his tobacco. He declared that it was the skull of an ancient Roman. On the inside was a paper pasted there, on which he had written the following:

"Oh, I'm the skull of a Roman bold
That fit in the ancient war;
From East to West I bore the flag
Of S. P. Q. and R.

"In East and West, and North and South,
We made the nations fear us—
Both Nebuchadnezzar and Hannibal,
And Pharaoh too, and Pyrrhus.

"We took their statutes from the Greeks,
And lots of manuscripts too;
We set adrift on his world-wide tramp
The original wandering Jew.

"But at last the beggarly Dutchman came,
With his lager and sauerkraut;
And wherever that beggarly Dutchman went
He made a terrible rout.

"We ist der Deutscher's Vaterland?
Is it near the ocean wild?
Is it where the feathery palm-trees grow?
Not thore, not there, my child.

"But it's somewhere down around the Rhine;
And now that Bismarck's come,
Down goes Napoleon to the ground,
And away goes the Pope from Rome!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"HE SAVED MY LIFE."

"I CAN'T bear this any longer!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby. "Here you are getting into all sorts of difficulties, each one worse than the other. I'm sure I don't see why you should. You're very quiet, Minnie dearest, but you have more unpleasant adventures than any person I ever heard of. You're run away with on horseback, you're shipwrecked, you're swept down a precipice by an avalanche, and you fall into the crater of a burning volcano. Every time there is some horrid man who saves you, and then proposes. As for you, you accept them all with equal readiness, one after another, and what is worse, you won't give any of them up. I've asked you explicitly which of them you'll give up, and you actually refuse to say. My dear child, what are you thinking of? You can't have them all. You can't have any of them. None of them are agreeable to your family. They're horrid. What are you going to do? Oh, how I wish you had dear mamma to take care of you! But she is in a better world. And here is poor dear papa who can't come. How shocked he would be if he knew all. What is worst, here is that dreadful American savage, who is gradually killing me. He certainly will be my death. What *am* I to do, dear? Can't you possibly show a little sense yourself—only a little, dear—and have some consideration for your poor sister? Even Ethel worries about you, though she has troubles of her own, poor darling; and aunty is really quite ill with anxiety. What *are* we going to do? I know one thing. *I'm* not going to put up with it. My mind is made up. I'll leave Rome at once, and go home and tell papa."

"Well, you needn't scold so," said Minnie. "It's my trouble. I can't help it. They would come. I'm sure *I* don't know what to do."

"Well, you needn't be so awfully kind to them all. That's what encourages them so. It's no use for me to try to keep them away if you make them all so welcome. Now there's that dreadful Italian. I'm positive he's going to get up some unpleasant plot. These Italians are so very revengeful. And he thinks you're so fond of him, and I'm so opposed. And he's right, too. You always act as if you're fond of him, and all the rest. As to that terrible American savage, I'm afraid to think of him; I positively am."

"Well, you needn't be so awfully unkind to him. He saved my life."

"That's no reason why he should deprive me of mine, which he will do if he goes on so much longer."

"You were very, very rude to him, Kitty," said Minnie, severely, "and very, very unkind—"

"I intended to be so."

"I really felt like crying, and running out and explaining things."

"I know you did, and ran back and locked the door. Oh, you wretched little silly goose, what *am* I *ever* to do with such a child as you are! You're really not a bit better than a baby."

This conversation took place on the day following the Baron's last eventful call. Poor Mrs. Willoughby was driven to desperation, and lay awake all night, trying to think of some plan to baffle the enemy, but was unsuccessful; and so she tried once more to have some influence over Minnie by a remonstrance as sharp as she could give.

"He's an American savage. I believe he's an Indian."

"I'm sure I don't see any thing savage in him. He's as gentle and as kind as he can be. And he's so *awfully* fond of me."

"Think how he burst in here, forcing his way in, and taking possession of the house. And then poor dear aunty! Oh, how she *was* shocked and horrified!"

"It's because he is so *awfully* fond of me, and was so perfectly *crazy* to see me."

"And then, just as I was beginning to persuade him to go away quietly, to think of you coming down!"

"Well, I couldn't bear to have him so sad, when he saved my life, and so I just thought I'd show myself, so as to put him at ease."

"A pretty way to show yourself—to let a great, horrid man treat you so."

"Well, that's what they *all* do," said Minnie, plaintively. "I'm sure *I* can't help it."

"Oh dear! was there ever such a child! Why, Minnie darling, you must know that such things are very, very ill-bred, and very, very indelicate and unrefined. And then, think how he came forcing himself upon us when we were driving. Couldn't he see that he wasn't wanted? No, he's a savage. And then, how he kept giving us all a history of his life. Every body could hear him, and people stared so that it was really quite shocking."

"Oh, that's because he is so very, very frank. He has none of the deceit of society, you know, Kitty darling."

"Deceit of society! I should think not. Only think how he acted yesterday—forcing his way in and rushing up stairs. Why, it's actually quite frightful. He's like a madman. We will have to keep all the doors locked, and send for the police. Why, do you know, Ethel says that he was here before, running about and shouting in the same way: 'Min!' 'Min!' 'Min!'—that's what the horrid wretch calls you—'Min! it's me.' 'Come, Min!'"

At this Minnie burst into a peal of merry, musical laughter, and laughed on till the tears came to her eyes. Her sister looked more disgusted than ever.

"He's such a boy," said Minnie; "he's just like a boy. He's so *awfully* funny. If I'm a child, he's a big boy, and the awfullest, funniest boy I ever saw. And then he's *so* fond of me. Why, he worships me. Oh, it's awfully nice."

"A boy! A beast, you mean—a horrid sav-

age. What *can* I do? I must send for a policeman. I'll certainly have the doors all locked. And then we'll all be prisoners."

"Well, then, it 'll all be your own fault, for *I* don't want to have any doors locked."

"Oh dear!" sighed her sister.

"Well, I don't. And I think you're very unkind."

"Why, you silly child, he'd come here some day, carry you off, and make you marry him."

"Well, I do wish he would," said Minnie, gravely. "I wish somebody would, for then it would put a stop to all this worry, and I really don't know what else ever will. Do *you*, now, Kitty darling?"

Mrs. Willoughby turned away with a gesture of despair.

An hour or two after some letters were brought in, one of which was addressed to

Miss Fay,
Poste Restante,
Roma.

Minnie opened this, and looked over it with a troubled air. Then she spoke to her sister, and they both went off to Minnie's room.

"Who do you think this is from?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know! Of course it's some more trouble."

"It's from Captain Kirby."

"Oh, of course! And of course he's here in Rome?"

"No, he isn't."

"What! Not yet?"

"No; but he wrote this from London. He has been to the house, and learned that we had gone to Italy. He says he has sent off letters to me, directed to every city in Italy, so that I may be sure to get it. Isn't that good of him?"

"Well?" asked Mrs. Willoughby, repressing an exclamation of vexation.

"Well, he says that in three days he will leave, and go first to Rome, as he thinks we will be most likely to be there this season. And so, you see, he's coming on; and he will be here in three days, you know."

"Minnie," said her sister, after some moments' solemn thought.

"Well, Kitty darling?"

"Do you ever think?"

"I don't know."

"Would you like one of these gentlemen of yours to blow one of the others' brains out, or stab him, or any thing of that sort?"

"How shocking you are, Kitty dear! What a dreadful question!"

"Well, understand me now. One of them *will* do that. There will be trouble, and your name will be associated with it."

"Well," said Minnie, "I know who *won't* be shot."

"Who?"

"Why, Rufus K. Gunn," said she, in the funny, prim way in which she always pronounced that name. "If he finds it out, he'll drive all the others away."

"And would you like that?"

"Well, you know, he's awfully fond of me, and he's so like a boy: and if I'm such a child, I could do better with a man, you know, that's like a boy, you know, than—than—"

"Nonsense! He's a madman, and you're a simpleton, you little goose."

"Well, then, we must be well suited to one another," said Minnie.

"Now, child, listen," said Mrs. Willoughby, firmly. "I intend to put a stop to this. I have made up my mind positively to leave Rome, and take you home to papa. I'll tell him all about it, put you under his care, and have no more responsibility with you. I think he'd better send you back to school. I've been too gentle. You need a firm hand. I'll be firm for a few days, till you can go to papa. You need not begin to cry. It's for your own good. If you're indulged any more, you'll simply go to ruin."

Mrs. Willoughby's tone was different from usual, and Minnie was impressed by it. She saw that her sister was resolved. So she stole up to her and twined her arms about her and kissed her.

"There, there," said her sister, kissing her again, "don't look so sad, Minnie darling. It's for your own good. We must go away, or else you'll have another of those dreadful people. You must trust to me now, dearest, and not interfere with me in any way."

"Well, well, you mustn't be unkind to poor Rufus K. Gunn," said Minnie.

"Unkind? Why, we won't be any thing to him at all."

"And am I never to—to—see him again?"

"No!" said her sister, firmly.

Minnie started, and looked at Mrs. Willoughby, and saw in her face a fixed resolution.

"No, never!" repeated Mrs. Willoughby. "I am going to take you back to England. I'm afraid to take any railroad or steamboat. I'll hire a carriage, and we'll all go in a quiet way to Florence. Then we can take the railroad to Leghorn, and go home by the way of Marseilles. No one will know that we've gone away. They'll think we have gone on an excursion. Now we'll go out driving this morning, and this afternoon we must keep the outer door locked, and not let any one in. I suppose there is no danger of meeting him in the morning. He must be on duty then."

"But mayn't I see him at all before we go?"

"No!"

"Just once—only once?"

"No, not once. You've seen that horrid man for the last time."

Minnie again looked at her sister, and again read her resolution in her face. She turned away, her head dropped, a sob escaped from her, and then she burst into tears.

Mrs. Willoughby left the room.

CHAPTER XIX.

JEALOUSY.

LORD HAWBURY had come to Rome for the sole purpose of watching over his friend Scone Dacres. But he had not found it so easy to do so. His friend kept by himself more than he used to, and for several days Hawbury had seen nothing of him. Once while with the ladies he had met him, and noticed the sadness and the gloom of his brow. He saw by this that he was still a prey to those feelings the exhibition of which had alarmed him at Naples, and made him resolve to accompany him here.

A few days afterward, while Hawbury was in his room, his friend entered. Hawbury arose and greeted him with unfeigned joy.

"Well, old man," he said, "you've kept yourself close, too. What have you been doing with yourself? I've only had one glimpse of you for an age. Doing Rome, hey? Antiquities, arts, churches, palaces, and all that sort of thing, I suppose. Come now, old boy, sit down and give an account of yourself. Have a weed? Here's Bass in prime order. Light up, my dear fellow, and let me look at you as you compose your manly form for a friendly smoke. And don't speak till you feel inclined."

Dacres took his seat with a melancholy smile, and selecting a cigar, lighted it, and smoked in silence for some time.

"Who was that Zouave fellow?" he asked at length: "the fellow that I saw riding by the carriage the other day?"

"That—oh, an old friend of mine. He's an American named Gunn. He's joined the Papal Zouaves from some whim, and a deuced good thing it is for them to get hold of such a man. I happened to call one day, and found him with the ladies."

"The ladies—ah!" and Dacres's eyes lighted up with a bad, hard light. "I suppose he's another of those precious cavaliers—the scum of all lands—that dance attendance on my charming wife."

"Oh, see here now, my dear fellow, really now," said Hawbury, "none of that, you know. This fellow is a friend of *mine*, and one of the best fellows I ever saw. You'd like him, old chap. He'd suit you."

"Yes, and suit my wife better," said Dacres, bitterly.

"Oh, come now, really, my dear boy, you're completely out. He don't know your wife at all. It's the other one, you know. Don't be jealous, now, if I tell you."

"Jealous!"

"Yes. I know your weakness, you know; but this is an old affair. I don't want to violate confidence, but—"

Dacres looked hard at his friend and breathed heavily. He was evidently much excited.

"But what?" he said, hoarsely.

"Well, you know, it's an old affair. It's the young one, you know—Miss Fay. He rather affects her, you know. That's about it."

"Miss Fay?"

"Yes; your child-angel, you know. But it's an older affair than yours; it is, really; so don't be giving way, man. Besides, his claims on her are as great as yours; yes, greater too. By Jove!"

"Miss Fay! Oh, is that all?" said Dacres, who, with a sigh of infinite relief, shook off all his late excitement, and became cool once more.

Hawbury noted this very thoughtfully.

"You see," said Dacres, "that terrible wife of mine is so cursedly beautiful and fascinating, and so infernally fond of admiration, that she keeps no end of fellows tagging at her heels. And so I didn't know but that this was some new admirer. Oh, she's a deep one! Her new style, which she has been cultivating for ten years, has made her look like an angel of light. Why, there's the very light of heaven in her eyes, and in her face there is nothing, I swear, but gentleness and purity and peace. Oh, had she but been what she now seems! Oh, if even now I could but believe this, I would even now fling my memories to the winds, and I'd lie down in the dust and let her trample on me, if she would only give me that tender and gentle love that now lurks in her face. Good Heavens! can such a change be possible? No; it's impossible! It can't be! Don't I know her? Can't I remember her? Is my memory all a dream? No, it's real; and it's marked deep by this scar that I wear. Never till that scar is obliterated can that woman change."

Dacres had been speaking, as he often did now, half to himself; and as he ended he rubbed his hand over the place where the scar lay, as though to soothe the inflammation that arose from the rush of angry blood to his head.

"Well, dear boy, I can only say I wish from my heart that her nature was like her face. She's no favorite of mine, for your story has made me look on her with your eyes, and I never have spoken to her except in the most distant way; but I must say I think her face has in it a good deal of that gentleness which you mention. Miss Fay treats her quite like an elder sister, and is deuced fond of her, too. I can see that. So she can't be very fiendish to her. Like loves like, you know, and the one that the child-angel loves ought to be a little of an angel herself, oughtn't she?"

Dacres was silent for a long time.

"There's that confounded Italian," said he, "dangling forever at her heels—the devil that saved her life. He must be her accepted lover, you know. He goes out riding beside the carriage."

"Well, really, my dear fellow, she doesn't seem overjoyed by his attentions."

"Oh, that's her art. She's so infernally deep. Do you think she'd let the world see her feelings? Never. Slimy, Sir, and cold and subtle and venomous and treacherous—a beautiful serpent. Aha! isn't that the way to hit her off? Yes, a beautiful, malignant, ven-

ominous serpent, with fascination in her eyes, and death and anguish in her bite. But she shall find out yet that others are not without power. Confound her!"

"Well, now, by Jove! old boy, I think the very best thing you can do is to go away somewhere, and get rid of these troubles."

"Go away! Can I go away from my own thoughts? Hawbury, the trouble is in my own heart. I must keep near her. There's that Italian devil. He shall not have her. I'll watch them, as I have watched them, till I find a chance for revenge."

"You have watched them, then?" asked Hawbury, in great surprise.

"Yes, both of them. I've seen the Italian prowling about where she lives. I've seen her on her balcony, evidently watching for him."

"But have you seen any thing more? This is only your fancy."

"Fancy! Didn't I see her herself standing on the balcony looking down. I was concealed by the shadow of a fountain, and she couldn't see me. She turned her face, and I saw it in that soft, sweet, gentle beauty which she has cultivated so wonderfully. I swear it seemed like the face of an angel, and I could have worshiped it. If she could have seen my face in that thick shadow she would have thought I was an adorer of hers, like the Italian — ha, ha! — instead of a pursuer, and an enemy."

"Well, I'll be hanged if I can tell myself which you are, old boy; but, at any rate, I'm glad to be able to state that your trouble will soon be over."

"How's that?"

"She's going away."

"Going away!"

"Yes."

"She! going away! where?"

"Back to England."

"Back to England! why, she's just come here. What's that for?"

"I don't know. I only know they're all going home. Well, you know, holy week's over, and there is no object for them to stay longer."

"Going away! going away!" replied Dacres, slowly. "Who told you?"

"Miss Fay."

"Oh, I don't believe it."

"There's no doubt about it, my dear boy. Miss Fay told me explicitly. She said they were going in a carriage by the way of Civita Castellana."

"What are they going that way for? What nonsense! I don't believe it."

"Oh, it's a fact. Besides, they evidently don't want it to be known."

"What's that?" asked Dacres, eagerly.

"I say they don't seem to want it to be known. Miss Fay told me in her childish way, and I saw that Mrs. Willoughby looked vexed, and tried to stop her."

"Tried to stop her! Ah! Who were there? Were you calling?"

"Oh no—it was yesterday morning. I was riding, and, to my surprise, met them. They were driving—Mrs. Willoughby and Miss Fay, you know—so I chatted with them a few moments, or rather with Miss Fay, and hoped I would see them again soon, at some *fête* or other, when she told me this."

"And my wife tried to stop her?"

"Yes."

"And looked vexed?"

"Yes."

"Then it was some secret of *hers*. *She* has some reason for keeping dark. The other has none. Aha! don't I understand her? She wants to keep it from *me*. She knows you're my friend, and was vexed that you should know. Aha! she dreads my presence. She knows I'm on her track. She wants to get away with her Italian—away from my sight. Aha! the tables are turned at last. Aha! my lady. Now we'll see. Now take your Italian and fly, and see how far you can get away from me. Take him, and see if you can hold him. Aha! my angel face, my mild, soft eyes of love, but devil's heart—can not I understand it all? I see through it. I've watched you. Wait till you see Scone Dacres on your track!"

"What's that? You don't really mean it?" cried Hawbury.

"Yes, I do."

"Will you follow her?"

"Yes, I will."

"What for? For a vague fancy of your jealous mind?"

"It isn't a fancy; it's a certainty. I've seen the Italian dogging her, dodging about her house, and riding with her. I've seen her looking very much as if she were expecting him at her balcony. Is all that nothing? She's seen me, and feels conscience-stricken, and longs to get away where she may be free from the terror of my presence. But I'll track her. I'll strike at her—at her heart, too; for I will strike through the Italian."

"By Jove!"

"I will, I swear!" cried Dacres, gloomily.

"You're mad, Dacres. You imagine all this. You're like a madman in a dream."

"It's no dream. I'll follow her. I'll track her."

"Then, by Jove, you'll have to take me with you, old boy! I see you're not fit to take care of yourself. I'll have to go and keep you from harm."

"You won't keep me from harm, old chap," said Dacres, more gently; "but I'd be glad if you would go. So come along."

"I will, by Jove!"

"I WATCHED HIM."

CHAPTER XX.

THE BARON'S WOES.

DACRES was not the only excited visitor that Hawbury had that day. Before its close another made his appearance in the person of the Baron.

"Well, my noble friend," cried Hawbury—"my Baron bold—how goes it? But, by Jove! what's the matter, my boy? Your brow deep scars of thunder have intrenched, and care sits on your faded cheek. Pour forth the mournful tale. I'll sympathize."

"I swear it's too almighty bad!" cried the Baron.

"What?"

"The way I'm getting humbugged."

"Humbugged! Who's been humbugging you?"

"Darn me if I know; and that's the worst of it by a thundering sight."

"Well, my dear fellow, if I can help you, you'd better let me know what it's all about."

"Why, Minnie; that's the row. There ain't another thing on this green earth that would trouble me for five seconds."

"Minnie? Oh! And what has happened—a lover's quarrel?"

"Not a quarrel. *She's* all right."

"What is it, then?"

"Why, she's disappeared."

"Disappeared! What do you mean by that?"

"Darn me if I know. I only know this—that they keep their place bolted and barred, and they've muffled the bell, and there's no servant to be seen, and I can't find out any thing about them. And it's too almighty bad. Now isn't it?"

"It's deuced odd, too—queer, by Jove! I don't understand. Are you sure they're all locked up?"

"'Course I am."

"And no servants?"

"Not a darned servant."

"Did you ask the concierge?"

"Course I did; and crossed his palm, too. But he didn't give me any satisfaction."

"What did he say?"

"Why, he said they were at home, for they had been out in the morning, and had got back again. Well, after that I went back and nearly knocked the door down. And that was no good; I didn't get a word. The concierge swore they were in, and they wouldn't so much as answer me. Now I call that too almighty hard, and I'd like to know what in thunder they all mean by it."

"By Jove! odd, too."

"Well, you know, I thought after a while that it would be all explained the next day; so I went home and waited, and came back the next afternoon. I tried it over again. Same result. I spoke to the concierge again, and he swore again that they were all in. They had been out in the morning, he said, and looked well. They had come home by noon, and had gone to their rooms. Well, I really did start the door that time, but didn't get any answer for my pains."

"By Jove!"

"Well, I was pretty hard up, I tell you. But I wasn't going to give up. So I staid there, and began a siege. I crossed the concierge's palm again, and was in and out all night. Toward morning I took a nap in his chair. He thought it was some government business or other, and assisted me all he could. I didn't see any thing at all, though, except an infernal Italian—a fellow that came calling the first day I was there, and worked himself in between me and Min. He was prowling about there, with another fellow, and stared hard at me. I watched him, and said nothing, for I wanted to find out his little game. He's up to something, I swear. When he saw I was on the ground, though, he beat a retreat.

"Well, I staid all night, and the next morning watched again. I didn't knock. It wasn't a bit of use—not a darned bit.

"Well, about nine o'clock the door opened, and I saw some one looking out very cautiously. In a minute I was standing before her, and held out my hand to shake hers. It was the old lady. But she didn't shake hands. She looked at me quite coolly.

"'Good-morning, ma'am,' said I, in quite a winning voice. 'Good-morning, ma'am.'

"'Good-morning,' she said.

"'I come to see Minnie,' said I.

"'To see Minnie!' said she; and then she told me she wasn't up.

"'Ain't up?' said I; 'and it so bright and early! Why, what's got her? Well, you just

go and tell her *I'm* here, and I'll just step inside and wait till she comes down,' said I.

"But the old lady didn't budge.

"'I'm not a servant,' she said, very stiff; 'I'm her aunt, and her guardian, and I allow no messages to pass between her and strange gentlemen.'

"'Strange gentlemen!' I cried. 'Why, ain't I engaged to her?'

"'I don't know you,' says she.

"'Wasn't I introduced to you?' says I.

"'No,' says she; 'I don't know you.'

"BUT I SAVED HER LIFE."

"'But I'm engaged to Minnie,' says I.

"'I don't recognize you,' says she. 'The family know nothing about you; and my niece is a silly girl, who is going back to her father, who will probably send her to school.'

"'But I saved her life,' says I.

"'That's very possible,' says she; 'many persons have done so; yet that gives you no right to annoy her; and you shall *not* annoy her. Your engagement is an absurdity. The child herself is an absurdity. You are an absurdity. Was it not you who was creating such a frightful disturbance here yesterday? Let me inform you, Sir, that if you repeat it, you will be handed over to the police. The police would certainly have been called yesterday had we not wished to avoid hurting your feelings. We now find that you have no feelings to hurt.'

"'Very well, ma'am,' says I; 'these are your views; but as you are not Minnie, I don't accept them. I won't retire from the field till I hear a command to that effect from Minnie herself. I allow no relatives to stand between me and my love. Show me Minnie, and let me hear what she has to say. That's all I ask, and that's fair and square.'

"'You shall not see her at all,' says the old lady, quite mild; 'not at all. You must not come again, for you will not be admitted. Police will be here to put you out if you attempt to force an entrance as you did before.'

"'Force an entrance!' I cried.

"'Yes,' she said, 'force an entrance. You did so, and you filled the whole house with your shouts. Is that to be borne? Not by us, Sir. And now go, and don't disturb us any more.'

"Well, I'll be darned if I ever felt so cut up in my life. The old lady was perfectly calm and cool; wasn't a bit scared—though there was no reason why she should be. She just gave it to me that way. But when she accused me of forcing an entrance and kicking up a row, I was struck all of a heap and couldn't say a word. *Me* force an entrance! *Me* kick up a row! And in Minnie's house! Why, the old woman's mad!

"Well, the old lady shut the door in my face, and I walked off; and I've been ever since trying to understand it, but I'll be darned if I can make head or tail of it. The only thing I see is that they're all keeping Minnie locked up away from me. They don't like me, though why they don't I can't see; for I'm as good as any body, and I've been particular about being civil to all of them. Still they don't like me, and they see that Minnie does, and they're trying to break up the engagement. But by the living jingo!" and the Baron clinched a good-sized and very sinewy fist, which he brought down hard on the table—"by the living jingo, they'll find they can't come it over *me!* No, *Sir!*"

"Is she fond of you—Miss Fay, I mean?"

"Fond! Course she is. She dotes on me."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure! As sure as I am of my own existence. Why, the way she looks at me is enough! She has a look of helpless trust, an innocent confidence, a tender, child-like faith and love, and a beseeching, pleading, imploring way that tells me she is mine through and through."

Hawbury was a little surprised. He thought he had heard something like that before.

"Oh, well," said he, "that's the chief thing, you know. If you're sure of the girl's affections, the battle's half won."

"Half won! Ain't it all won?"

"Well, not exactly. You see, with us English, there are ever so many considerations."

"But with us Americans there is only one consideration, and that is, Do you love me? Still, if her relatives are particular about dollars, I can foot up as many thousands as her old man, I dare say; and then, if they care for rank, why, I'm a Baron!"

"And what's more, old boy," said Hawbury, earnestly, "if they wanted a valiant, stout, true, honest, loyal soul, they needn't go further than Rufus K. Gunn, Baron de Atramonte."

The Baron's face flushed.

"Hawbury," said he, "that's good in you. We've tried one another, haven't we? You're a brick! And I don't need *you* to tell *me* what you think of me. But if you could get a word into the ear of that cantankerous old lady, and just let her know what *you* know about me, it might move her. You see you're after her style, and I'm not; and she can't see any thing but a man's manner, which, after all, varies in all countries. Now if you could speak a word for me, Hawbury—"

"By Jove! my dear fellow, I'd be glad to do so—I swear I would; but you don't appear to know that I won't have the chance. They're all going to leave Rome to-morrow morning."

The Baron started as though he had been shot.

"What!" he cried, hoarsely. "What's that? Leave Rome?"

"Yes."

"And to-morrow morning?"

"Yes; Miss Fay told me herself—"

"Miss Fay told you herself! By Heaven! What do they mean by that?" And the Baron sat trembling with excitement.

"Well, the holy week's over."

"Darn it all, that's got nothing to do with it! It's me! They're trying to get her from me! How are they going? Do you know?"

"They are going in a carriage by the way of Civita Castellana."

"In a carriage by the way of Civita Castellana! Darn that old idiot of a woman! what's she up to now? If she's running away from me, she'll wish herself back before she gets far on that road. Why, there's an infernal nest of brigands there that call themselves Garibaldians; and, by thunder, the woman's crazy! They'll be seized and held to ransom—perhaps worse. Heavens! I'll go mad! I'll run and tell them. But no; they won't see me. What 'll I do? And Minnie! I can't give her up. She can't give me up. She's a poor, trembling little creature; her whole life hangs on mine. Separation from me would kill her. Poor little girl! Separation! By thunder, they shall never separate us! What devil makes the old woman go by that infernal road? Brigands all the way! But I'll go after them; I'll follow them. They'll find it almighty hard work to keep her from me! I'll see her, by thunder! and I'll get her out of their clutches! I swear I will! I'll bring her back here to Rome, and I'll get the Pope himself to bind her to me with a knot that all the old women under heaven can never loosen!"

"What! You're going? By Jove! that's odd, for I'm going with a friend on the same road."

"Good again! Three cheers! And you'll see the old woman, and speak a good word for me?"

"If I see her and get a chance, I certainly will, by Jove!"

CHAPTER XXI.

AN EVENTFUL JOURNEY.

On the day following two carriages rolled out of Rome, and took the road toward Florence by the way of Civita Castellana. One carriage held four ladies; the other one was occupied by four lady's-maids and the luggage of the party.

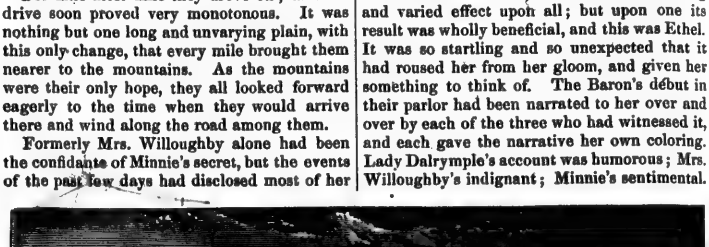
It was early morning, and over the wide Campagna there still hung mists, which were dissipated gradually as the sun arose. As they

went on the day advanced, and with the departing mists there opened up a wide view. On either side extended the desolate Campagna, over which passed lines of ruined aqueducts on their way from the hills to the city. Here and there crumbling ruins arose above the plain—some ancient, others medieval, none modern. Before them, in the distance, arose the Apennines, among which were, here and there, visible the white outlines of some villa or hamlet.

For mile after mile they drove on; and the drive soon proved very monotonous. It was nothing but one long and unvarying plain, with this only change, that every mile brought them nearer to the mountains. As the mountains were their only hope, they all looked forward eagerly to the time when they would arrive there and wind along the road among them.

Formerly Mrs. Willoughby alone had been the confidante of Minnie's secret, but the events of the past few days had disclosed most of her troubles to the other ladies also, at least as far as the general outlines were concerned. The consequence was, that they all knew perfectly well the reason why they were traveling in this way, and Minnie knew that they all knew it. Yet this unpleasant consciousness did not in the least interfere with the sweetness of her temper and the gentleness of her manner. She sat there, with a meek smile and a resigned air, as though the only part now left her in life was the patient endurance of her unmerited wrongs. She blamed no one; she made no complaint; yet there was in her attitude something so touching, so clinging, so pathetic, so forlorn, and in her face something so sweet, so sad, so reproachful, and so piteous, that she enforced sympathy; and each one began to have a half-guilty fear that Minnie had been wronged by her. Especially did Mrs. Willoughby feel this. She feared that she had neglected the artless and simple-minded child; she feared that she had not been sufficiently thoughtful about her; and now longed to do something to make amends for this imaginary neglect. So she sought to make the journey as pleasant as possible by cheerful remarks and lively observations. None of these things, however, produced any effect upon the attitude of Minnie. She sat there, with unalterable sweetness and unvarying patience, just like a holy martyr, who freely forgave all her enemies, and was praying for those who had despitefully used her.

The exciting events consequent upon the Baron's appearance, and his sudden revelation in the rôle of Minnie's lover, had exercised a strong and varied effect upon all; but upon one its result was wholly beneficial, and this was Ethel. It was so startling and so unexpected that it had roused her from her gloom, and given her something to think of. The Baron's début in their parlor had been narrated to her over and over by each of the three who had witnessed it, and each gave the narrative her own coloring. Lady Dalrymple's account was humorous; Mrs. Willoughby's indignant; Minnie's sentimental.



THE PROCESSION ACROSS THE CAMPAGNA.

Out of all these Ethel gained a fourth idea, compounded of these three, which again blended with another, and an original one of her own, gained from a personal observation of the Baron, whose appearance on the stairs and impatient summons for "Min" were very vividly impressed on her memory. In addition to this there was the memory of that day on which they endeavored to fight off the enemy.

That was, indeed, a memorable day, and was now alluded to by them all as the day of the siege. It was not without difficulty that they had withstood Minnie's earnest protestations, and intrenched themselves. But Mrs. Willoughby was obdurate, and Minnie's tears, which flowed freely, were unavailing.

Then there came the first knock of the impatient and aggressive visitor, followed by others in swift succession, and in ever-increasing power. Every knock went to Minnie's heart. It excited an unlimited amount of sympathy for the one who had saved her life, and was now excluded from her door. But as the knocks

grew violent and imperative, and Minnie grew sad and pitiful, the other ladies grew indignant. Lady Dalrymple was on the point of sending off for the police, and only Minnie's frantic entreaties prevented this. At last the door seemed almost beaten in, and their feelings underwent a change. They were convinced that he was mad, or else intoxicated. Of the madness of love they did not think. Once convinced that he was mad, they became terrified. The maids all hid themselves. None of them now would venture out even to call the police. They expected that the concierge would interpose, but in vain. The concierge was bribed.

After a very eventful day night came. They heard footsteps pacing up and down, and knew that it was their tormentor. Minnie's heart again melted with tender pity for the man whose love for her had turned his head, and she begged to be allowed to speak to him. But this was not permitted. So she went to bed and fell asleep. So, in process of time, did the others, and the night passed without any trouble. Then morning came, and there was a debate as to who should confront the enemy. There was no noise, but they knew that he was there. At last Lady Dalrymple summoned up her energies, and went forth to do battle. The result has already been described in the words of the bold Baron himself.

But even this great victory did not reassure the ladies. Dreading another visit, they hurried away to a hotel, leaving the maids to follow with the luggage as soon as possible. On the following morning they had left the city.

Events so very exciting as these had produced a very natural effect upon the mind of Ethel. They had thrown her thoughts out of their old groove, and fixed them in a new one. Besides, the fact that she was actually leaving the man who had caused her so much sorrow was already a partial relief. She had dreaded meeting him so much that she had been forced to keep herself a prisoner. A deep grief still remained in her heart; but, at any rate, there was now some pleasure to be felt, if only of a superficial kind.

As for Mrs. Willoughby, in spite of her self-reproach about her purely imaginary neglect of Minnie, she felt such an extraordinary relief that it affected all her nature. The others might feel fatigue from the journey. Not she. She was willing to continue the journey for an indefinite period, so long as she had the sweet consciousness that she was bearing Minnie farther and farther away from the grasp of "that horrid man." The consequence was, that she was lively, lovely, brilliant, cheerful, and altogether delightful. She was as tender to Minnie as a mother could be. She was lavish in her promises of what she would do for her. She chatted gayly with Ethel about a thousand things, and was delighted to find that Ethel reciprocated. She rallied Lady Dalrymple on her silence, and congratulated her over and over, in spite of Minnie's frowns, on the success of her generalship. And so at last the weary Campagna was traversed, and the two carriages began to ascend among the mountains.

Several other travelers were passing over that Campagna road, and in the same direction. They were not near enough for their faces to be discerned, but the ladies could look back and see the signs of their presence. First there was a carriage with two men, and about two miles behind another carriage with two other men; while behind these, again, there rode a solitary horseman, who was gradually gaining on the other travelers.

Now, if it had been possible for Mrs. Willoughby to look back and discern the faces of the travelers who were moving along the road behind her, what a sudden overturn there would have been in her feelings, and what a blight would have fallen upon her spirits! But Mrs. Willoughby remained in the most blissful ignorance of the persons of these travelers, and so was able to maintain the sunshine of her soul.

At length there came over that sunny soul the first cloud.

The solitary horseman, who had been riding behind, had overtaken the different carriages.

The first carriage contained Lord Hawbury and Scone Dacres. As the horseman passed, he recognized them with a careless nod and smile.

Scone Dacres grasped Lord Hawbury's arm.

"Did you see him?" he cried. "The Italian! I thought so! What do you say now? Wasn't I right?"

"By Jove!" cried Lord Hawbury.

Whereupon Dacres relapsed into silence, sitting upright, glaring after the horseman, cherishing in his gloomy soul the darkest and most vengeful thoughts.

The horseman rode on further, and overtook the next carriage. In this there were two men, one in the uniform of the Papal Zouaves, the other in rusty black. He turned toward these, and greeted them with the same nod and smile.

"Do you see that man, parson?" said the Baron to his companion. "Do you recognize him?"

"No."

"Well, you saw him at Minnie's house. He came in."

"No, he didn't."

"Didn't he? No. By thunder, it wasn't that time. Well, at any rate, that man, I believe, is at the bottom of the row. It's my belief that he's trying to cut me out, and he'll find he's got a hard row to hoe before he succeeds in that project."

And with these words the Baron sat glaring after the Italian, with something in his eye that resembled faintly the fierce glance of Scone Dacres.

The Italian rode on. A few miles further were the two carriages. Minnie and her sister were sitting on the front seats, and saw the

stranger as he advanced. He soon came near enough to be distinguished, and Mrs. Willoughby recognized Girasole.

Her surprise was so great that she uttered an exclamation of terror, which startled the other ladies, and made them all look in that direction.

"How very odd!" said Ethel, thoughtfully.

"And now I suppose you'll all go and say that I brought *him* too," said Minnie. "That's *always* the way you do. You *never* seem to think that I may be innocent. You *always* blame me for every little mite of a thing that may happen."

No one made any remark, and there was silence in the carriage as the stranger approached. The ladies bowed somewhat coolly, except Minnie, who threw upon him the most imploring look that could possibly be sent from human eyes, and the Italian's impressible nature thrilled before those beseeching, pleading, earnest, unfathomable, tender, helpless, innocent orbs. Removing his hat, he bowed low.

"I haf not been awara," he said, politely, in his broken English, "that youar ladysippa's bin intend to travalla. Ees eet not subito intenzion?"

Mrs. Willoughby made a polite response of a general character, the Italian paused a moment to drink in deep draughts from Minnie's great beseeching eyes that were fixed upon his, and then, with a low bow, he passed on.

"I believe I'm losing my senses," said Mrs. Willoughby.

"Why, Kitty darling?" asked Minnie.

"I don't know how it is, but I actually trembled when that man came up, and I haven't got over it yet."

"I'm sure I don't see why," said Minnie. "You're *always* imagining things, though. Now *isn't* she, Ethel dearest?"

"Well, really, I don't see much in the Count to make one tremble. I suppose poor dear Kitty has been too much agitated lately, and it's her poor nerves."

"I have my lavender, Kitty dear," said Lady Dalrymple. "Won't you take it? Or would you prefer valerian?"

"Thanks, much, but I do not need it," said Mrs. Willoughby. "I suppose it will pass off."

"I'm sure the poor Count never did any body any harm," said Minnie, plaintively; "so you needn't all abuse him so—unless you're all angry at him for saving my life. I remember a time when you all thought very differently, and all praised him up, no end."

"Really, Minnie darling, I have nothing against the Count, only once he was a little too intrusive; but he seems to have got over that; and if he'll only be nice and quiet and proper, I'm sure I've nothing to say against him."

They drove on for some time, and at length reached Civita Castellana. Here they drove up to the hotel, and the ladies got out and went up to their apartments. They had three rooms up stairs, two of which looked out into the street, while the third was in the rear. At the front windows was a balcony.

The ladies now disrobed themselves, and their maids assisted them to perform the duties of a very simple toilet. Mrs. Willoughby's was first finished. So she walked over to the window, and looked out into the street.

It was not a very interesting place, nor was there much to be seen; but she took a lazy, languid interest in the sight which met her eyes.

There were the two carriages. The horses were being led to water. Around the carriages was a motley crowd, composed of the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, forming that realm of beggars which from immemorial ages has flourished in Italy. With these was intermingled a crowd of ducks, geese, goats, pigs, and ill-looking, mangy, snarling curs.

Upon these Mrs. Willoughby looked for some time, when at length her ears were arrested by the roll of wheels down the street. A carriage was approaching, in which there were two travelers. One hasty glance sufficed, and she turned her attention once more to the ducks, geese, goats, dogs, and beggars. In a few minutes the crowd was scattered by the newly-arrived carriage. It stopped. A man jumped out. For a moment he looked up, staring hard at the windows. That moment was enough. Mrs. Willoughby had recognized him.

She rushed away from the windows. Lady Dalrymple and Ethel were in this room, and Minnie in the one beyond. All were startled by Mrs. Willoughby's exclamation, and still more by her looks.

"Oh!" she cried.

"What?" cried they. "What is it?"

"*He's* there! *He's* there!"

"Who? who?" they cried, in alarm.

"That horrid man!"

Lady Dalrymple and Ethel looked at one another in utter horror.

As for Minnie, she burst into the room, peeped out of the windows, saw "that horrid man," then ran back, then sat down, then jumped up, and then burst into a peal of the merriest laughter that ever was heard from her.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad! I'm *so* glad!" she exclaimed. "Oh, it's so *awfully* funny. Oh, I'm *so* glad! Oh, Kitty darling, don't, please don't, look so cross. Oh, ple-e-e-e-e-e-e-ase don't, Kitty darling. You make me laugh worse. It's so *awfully* funny!"

But while Minnie laughed thus, the others looked at each other in still greater consternation, and for some time there was not one of them who knew what to say.

But Lady Dalrymple again threw herself in the gap.

"You need not feel at all nervous, my dears," said she, gravely. "I do not think that this person can give us any trouble. He certainly can not intrude upon us in these apartments, and on the highway, you know, it will be quite as difficult for him to hold any communication

"AS FOR DANGER

with us. So I really don't see any cause for alarm on your part, nor do I see why dear Minnie should exhibit such delight."

These words brought comfort to Ethel and Mrs. Willoughby. They at once perceived their truth. To force himself into their presence in a public hotel was, of course, impossible, even for one so reckless as he seemed to be; and on the road he could not trouble them in any way, since he would have to drive before them or behind them.

At Lady Dalrymple's reference to herself, Minnie looked up with a bright smile.

"You're awfully cross with me, aunty darling," she said; "but I forgive you. Only I can't help laughing, you know, to see how frightened you all are at poor Rufus K. Gunn. And, Kitty dearest, oh how you *did* run away from the window! It was *awfully* funny, you know."

Not long after the arrival of the Baron and his friends another carriage drove up. None of the ladies were at the window, and so they did not see the easy nonchalance of Hawbury as he lounged into the house, or the stern face of Scone Dacres as he strode before him.

"AS FOR DAMOAIRE—POUF! DERE IS ROME."

CHAPTER XXII.

ADVICE REJECTED.

During dinner the ladies conversed freely about "that horrid man," wondering what plan he would adopt to try to effect an entrance among them. They were convinced that some such attempt would be made, and the servants of the inn who waited on them were strictly charged to see that no one disturbed them. However, their dinner was not interrupted and after it was over they began to think of retiring, so as to leave at an early hour on the following morning. Minnie had already taken her departure, and the others were thinking of following her example, when a knock came at the door.

All started. One of the maids went to the door, and found a servant there who brought a message from the Baron Atramonte. He wished to speak to the ladies on business of the most urgent importance. At this confirmation of their expectations the ladies looked at one another with a smile mingled with vexation, and Lady Dalrymple at once sent word that they could not possibly see him.

But the Baron was not to be put off. In a few moments the servant came back again, and brought another message, of a still more urgent character, in which the Baron entreated them to grant him this interview, and assured them that it was a matter of life and death.

"He's beginning to be more and more violent," said Lady Dalrymple. "Well, dears," she added, resignedly, "in my opinion it will be better to see him, and have done with him. If we do not, I'm afraid he will pester us further. I will see him. You had better retire to your own apartments."

Upon this she sent down an invitation to the Baron to come up, and the ladies retreated to their rooms.

The Baron entered, and, as usual, offered to shake hands—an offer which, as usual, Lady Dalrymple did not accept. He then looked earnestly all round the room, and gave a sigh. He evidently had expected to see Minnie, and was disappointed. Lady Dalrymple marked the glance, and the expression which followed.

"Well, ma'am," said he, as he seated himself near to Lady Dalrymple, "I said that the business I wanted to speak about was important, and that it was a matter of life and death. I assure you that it is. But before I tell it I want to say something about the row in Rome. I have reason to understand that I caused a little annoyance to you all. If I did, I'm sure I didn't intend it. I'm sorry. There! Let's say no more about it. 'Tain't often that I say I'm sorry, but I say so now. Conditionally, though—that is, if I really *did* annoy any body."

"Well, Sir?"

"Well, ma'am—about the business I came for. You have made a sudden decision to take this journey. I want to know, ma'am, if you made any inquiries about this road before starting?"

"This road? No, certainly not."

"I thought *so*," said the Baron. "Well, ma'am, I've reason to believe that it's somewhat unsafe."

"Unsafe?"

"Yes; particularly for ladies."

"And why?"

"Why, ma'am, the country is in a disordered state, and near the boundary line it swarms with brigands. They call themselves Garibaldians, but between you and me, ma'am, they're

neither more nor less than robbers. You see, along the boundary it is convenient for them to dodge to one side or the other, and where the road runs there are often crowds of them. Now our papal government means well, but it ain't got power to keep down these brigands. It would like to, but it can't. You see, the scum of all Italy gather along the borders, because they know we *are* weak; and so there it is."

"And you think there is danger on this road?" said Lady Dalrymple, looking keenly at him.

"I do, ma'am."

"Pray have you heard of any recent acts of violence along the road?"

"No, ma'am."

"Then what reason have you for supposing that there is any particular danger now?"

"A friend of mine told me so, ma'am."

"But do not people use the road? Are not carriages constantly passing and repassing? Is it likely that if it were unsafe there would be no acts of violence? Yet you say there have been none."

"Not of late, ma'am."

"But it is of late, and of the present time, that we are speaking."

"I can only say, ma'am, that the road is considered very dangerous."

"Who considers it so?"

"If you had made inquiries at Rome, ma'am, you would have found this out, and never would have thought of this road."

"And you advise us not to travel it?"

"I do, ma'am."

"What would you advise us to do?"

"I would advise you, ma'am, most earnestly, to turn and go back to Rome, and leave by another route."

Lady Dalrymple looked at him, and a slight smile quivered on her lips.

"I see, ma'am, that for some reason or other you doubt my word. Would you put confidence in it if another person were to confirm what I have said?"

"That depends entirely upon who the other person may be."

"The person I mean is Lord Hawbury."

"Lord Hawbury? Indeed!" said Lady Dalrymple, in some surprise. "But he's in Rome."

"No, ma'am, he's not. He's here—in this hotel."

"In this hotel? Here?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I'm sure I should like to see him very much, and hear what he says about it."

"I'll go and get him, then," said the Baron, and, rising briskly, he left the room.

In a short time he returned with Hawbury. Lady Dalrymple expressed surprise to see him, and Hawbury explained that he was traveling with a friend. Lady Dalrymple, of course, thought this a fresh proof of his infatuation about Minnie, and wondered how he could be a friend to a man whom she considered as Minnie's persecutor and tormentor.

The Baron at once proceeded to explain how the matter stood, and to ask Hawbury's opinion.

"Yes," said Lady Dalrymple, "I should really like to know what you think about it."

"Well, really," said Hawbury, "I have no acquaintance with the thing, you know. Never been on this road in my life. But, at the same time, I can assure you that this gentleman is a particular friend of mine, and one of the best fellows I know. I'd stake my life on his perfect truth and honor. If he says any thing, you may believe it because he says it. If he says there are brigands on the road, they must be there."

"Oh, of course," said Lady Dalrymple. "You are right to believe your friend, and I should trust his word also. But do you not see that perhaps he may believe what he says, and yet be mistaken?"

At this the Baron's face fell. Lord Hawbury's warm commendation of him had excited his hopes, but now Lady Dalrymple's answer had destroyed them.

"For my part," she added, "I don't really think any of us know much about it. I wish we could find some citizen of the town, or some reliable person, and ask him. I wonder whether the inn-keeper is a trust-worthy man."

The Baron shook his head.

"I wouldn't trust one of them. They're the greatest rascals in the country. Every man of them is in league with the Garibaldians and brigands. This man would advise you to take whatever course would benefit himself and his friends most."

"But surely we might find some one whose opinion would be reliable. What do you say to one of my drivers? The one that drove our carriage looks like a good, honest man."

"Well, perhaps so; but I wouldn't trust one of them. I don't believe there's an honest vetturino in all Italy."

Lady Dalrymple elevated her eyebrows, and threw at Hawbury a glance of despair.

"He speaks English, too," said Lady Dalrymple.

"So do some of the worst rascals in the country," said the Baron.

"Oh, I don't think he can be a very bad rascal. We had better question him, at any rate. Don't you think so, Lord Hawbury?"

"Well, yes; I suppose it won't do any harm to have a look at the beggar."

The driver alluded to was summoned, and soon made his appearance. He was a square-headed fellow, with a grizzled beard, and one of those non-committal faces which may be worn by either an honest man or a knave. Lady Dalrymple thought him the former; the Baron the latter. The result will show which of these was in the right.

The driver spoke very fair English. He had been two or three times over the road. He had not been over it later than two years before. He didn't know it was dangerous. He had

never heard of brigands being here. He didn't know. There was a signore at the hotel who might know. He was traveling to Florence alone. He was on horseback.

As soon as Lady Dalrymple heard this she suspected that it was Count Girasole. She determined to have his advice about it. So she sent a private request to that effect.

It was Count Girasole. He entered, and threw his usual smile around. He was charmed, in his broken English, to be of any service to miladi.

To Lady Dalrymple's statement and question Girasole listened attentively. As she concluded a faint smile passed over his face. The Baron watched him attentively.

"I know no brigand on dissa road," said he.

Lady Dalrymple looked triumphantly at the others.

"I have travail dissa road many time. No dangaire—alla safe."

Another smile from Lady Dalrymple.

The Count Girasole looked at Hawbury and then at the Baron, with a slight dash of mockery in his face.

"As for dangaire," he said—"ponf! dere is none. See, I go alone—no arms, not a knife—an' yet gold in my porte-monnaie."

And he drew forth his porte-monnaie, and opened it so as to exhibit its contents.

A little further conversation followed. Girasole evidently was perfectly familiar with the road. The idea of brigands appeared to strike him as some exquisite piece of pleasantry. He looked as though it was only his respect for the company which prevented him from laughing outright. They had taken the trouble to summon him for that! And, besides, as the Count suggested, even if a brigand did appear, there would be always travelers within hearing.

Both Hawbury and the Baron felt humiliated, especially the latter; and Girasole certainly had the best of it on that occasion, whatever his lot had been at other times.

The Count withdrew. The Baron followed, in company with Hawbury. He was deeply dejected. First of all, he had hoped to see Minnie. Then he hoped to frighten the party back. As to the brigands, he was in most serious earnest. All that he said he believed. He could not understand the driver and Count Girasole. The former he might consider a scoundrel; but why should Girasole mislead? And yet he believed that he was right. As for Hawbury, he didn't believe much in the brigands, but he did believe in his friend, and he didn't think much of Girasole. He was sorry for his friend, yet didn't know whether he wanted the party to turn back or not. His one trouble was Dacres, who now was watching the Italian like a blood-hound, who had seen him, no doubt, go up to the ladies, and, of course, would suppose that Mrs. Willoughby had sent for him.

As for the ladies, their excitement was great. The doors were thin, and they had heard every word of the conversation. With Mrs. Willoughby there was but one opinion as to the Baron's motive: she thought he had come to get a peep at Minnie, and also to frighten them back to Rome by silly stories. His signal failure afforded her great triumph. Minnie, as usual, sympathized with him, but said nothing. As for Ethel, the sudden arrival of Lord Hawbury was overwhelming, and brought a return of all her former excitement. The sound of his voice again vibrated through her, and at first there began to arise no end of wild hopes, which, however, were as quickly dispelled. The question arose, What brought him there? There seemed to her but one answer, and that was his infatuation for Minnie. Yet to her, as well as to Lady Dalrymple, it seemed very singular that he should be so warm a friend to Minnie's tormentor. It was a puzzling thing. Perhaps he did not know that the Baron was Minnie's lover. Perhaps he thought that his friend would give her up, and he could win her. Amidst these thoughts there came a wild hope that perhaps he did not love Minnie so very much, after all. But this hope soon was dispelled as she recalled the events of the past, and reflected on his cool and easy indifference to every thing connected with her.

Such emotions as these actuated the ladies; and when the guests had gone they joined their aunt once more, and deliberated. Minnie took no part in the debate, but sat apart, looking like an injured being. There was among them all the same opinion, and that was that it was all a clumsy device of the Baron's to frighten them back to Rome. Such being their opinion, they did not occupy much time in debating about their course on the morrow. The idea of going back did not enter their heads.

This event gave a much more agreeable feeling to Mrs. Willoughby and Lady Dalrymple than they had known since they had been aware that the Baron had followed them. They felt that they had grappled with the difficulty. They had met the enemy and defeated him. Besides, the presence of Hawbury was of itself a guarantee of peace. There could be no further danger of any unpleasant scenes while Hawbury was with him. Girasole's presence, also, was felt to be an additional guarantee of safety.

It was felt by all to be a remarkable circumstance that so many men should have followed them on what they had intended as quite a secret journey. These gentlemen who followed them were the very ones, and the only ones, from whom they wished to conceal it. Yet it had all been revealed to them, and lo! here they all were. Some debate arose as to whether it would not be better to go back to Rome now, and defy the Baron, and leave by another route. But this debate was soon given up, and they looked forward to the journey as one which might afford new and peculiar enjoyment.

On the following morning they started at an early hour. Girasole left about half an hour after them, and passed them a few miles along

the road. The Baron and the Reverend Saul left next; and last of all came Hawbury and Dacres. The latter was, if possible, more gloomy and vengeful than ever. The visit of the Italian on the preceding evening was fully believed by him to be a scheme of his wife's. Nor could any amount of persuasion or vehement statement on Hawbury's part in any way shake his belief.

"No," he would say, "you don't understand. Depend upon it, she got him up there to feast her eyes on him. Depend upon it, she managed to get some note from him, and pass one to him in return. He had only to run it under the leaf of a table, or stick it inside of some book: no doubt they have it all arranged, and pass their infernal love-letters backward and forward. But I'll soon have a chance. My time is coming. It's near, too. I'll have my vengeance; and then for all the wrongs of all my life that demon of a woman shall pay me dear!"

To all of which Hawbury had nothing to say. He could say nothing; he could do nothing. He could only stand by his friend, go with him, and watch over him, hoping to avert the crisis which he dreaded, or, if it did come, to lessen the danger of his friend.

The morning was clear and beautiful. The road wound among the hills. The party went in the order above mentioned.

First, Girasole, on horseback.

Next, and two miles at least behind, came the two carriages with the ladies and their maids.

Third, and half a mile behind these, came the Baron and the Reverend Saul.

Last of all, and half a mile behind the Baron, came Hawbury and Scone Dacres.

These last drove along at about this distance. The scenery around grew grander, and the mountains higher. The road was smooth and well constructed, and the carriage rolled along with an easy, comfortable rumble.

They were driving up a slope which wound along the side of a hill. At the top of the hill trees appeared on each side, and the road made a sharp turn here.

Suddenly the report of a shot sounded ahead. Then a scream.

"Good Lord! Dacres, did you hear that?" cried Hawbury. "The Baron was right, after all."

The driver here tried to stop his horses, but Hawbury would not let him.

"Have you a pistol, Dacres?"

"No."

"Get out!" he shouted to the driver; and, kicking him out of the seat, he seized the reins himself, and drove the horses straight forward to where the noise arose.

"It's the brigands, Dacres. The ladies are there."

"My wife! O God! my wife!" groaned Dacres. But a minute before he had been cursing her.

"Get a knife! Get something, man! Have a fight for it!"

Dacres murmured something.

Hawbury lashed the horses, and drove them straight toward the wood.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAUGHT IN AMBUSH.

THE ladies had been driving on, quite unconscious of the neighborhood of any danger, admiring the beauty of the scenery, and calling one another's attention to the various objects of interest which from time to time became visible. Thus engaged, they slowly ascended the incline already spoken of, and began to enter the forest. They had not gone far when the road took a sudden turn, and here a startling spectacle burst upon their view.

The road on turning descended slightly into a hollow. On the right arose a steep acclivity, covered with the dense forest. On the other side the ground rose more gradually, and was covered over by a forest much less dense. Some distance in front the road took another turn, and was lost to view among the trees. About a hundred yards in front of them a tree had been felled, and lay across the way, barring their progress.

About twenty armed men stood before them close by the place where the turn was. Among them was a man on horseback. To their amazement, it was Girasole.

Before the ladies could recover from their astonishment two of the armed men advanced, and the driver at once stopped the carriage.

Girasole then came forward.

"Miladi," said he, "I haf de honore of to invitar you to descend."

"Pray what is the meaning of this?" inquired Lady Dalrymple, with much agitation.

"It means dat I war wrong. Dere are brigand on dis road."

Lady Dalrymple said not another word.

The Count approached, and politely offered his hand to assist the ladies out, but they rejected it, and got out themselves. First Mrs. Willoughby, then Ethel, then Lady Dalrymple, then Minnie. Three of the ladies were white with utter horror, and looked around in sickening fear upon the armed men; but Minnie showed not even the slightest particle of fear.

"How horrid!" she exclaimed. "And now some one will come and save my life again. It's *always* the way. I'm sure *this* isn't my fault, Kitty darling."

Before her sister could say any thing Girasole approached.

"Pardon, mees," he said; "but I haf made dis recepsion for you. You sall be well treat. Do not fear. I lay down my life."

"Villain!" cried Lady Dalrymple. "Arrest her at your peril. Remember who she is. She has friends powerful enough to avenge her if you dare to injure her."

"You arra mistake," said Girasole, politely. "Se is mine, not yours. I am her best fren. Se is fiancée to me. I save her life—tell her my love—make a proposexion. Se accept me. Se is my fiancée. I was oppose by you. What else sall I do? I mus haf her. Se is mine. I am an Italiano nobile, an' I love her. Dere is no harm for any. You mus see dat I haf de right. But for me se would be dead."

Lady Dalrymple was not usually excitable, but now her whole nature was aroused; her eyes flashed with indignation; her face turned red; she gasped for breath, and fell to the ground. Ethel rushed to assist her, and two of the maids came up. Lady Dalrymple lay senseless.

With Mrs. Willoughby the result was different. She burst into tears.

"Count Girasole," she cried, "oh, spare her! If you love her, spare her. She is only a child. If we opposed you, it was not from any objection to you; it was because she is such a child."

"You mistake," said the Count, shrugging his shoulders. "I love her better than life. Se love me. It will make her happy. You come too. You sall see se is happy. Come. Be my sistaire. It is love—"

Mrs. Willoughby burst into fresh tears at this, and flung her arms around Minnie, and moaned and wept.

"Well, now, Kitty darling, I think it's horrid. You're *never* satisfied. You're always finding fault. I'm sure if you don't like Rufus K. Gunn, you—"

But Minnie's voice was interrupted by the sound of approaching wheels. It was the carriage of the Baron and his friend. The Baron had feared brigands, but he was certainly not expecting to come upon them so suddenly. The brigands had been prepared, and as the carriage turned it was suddenly stopped by the two carriages in front, and at once was surrounded.

The Baron gave one lightning glance, and surveyed the whole situation. He did not move, but his form was rigid, and every nerve was braced, and his eyes gleamed fiercely. He saw it all—the crowd of women, the calm face of Minnie, and the uncontrollable agitation of Mrs. Willoughby.

"Well, by thunder!" he exclaimed.

Girasole rode up and called out:

"Surrender! You arra my prisoner."

"What! it's you, is it?" said the Baron; and he glared for a moment with a vengeful look at Girasole.

"Descend," said Girasole. "You mus be bound."

"Bound? All right. Here, parson, you jump down, and let them tie your hands."

The Baron stood up. The Reverend Saul stood up too. The Reverend Saul began to step down very carefully. The brigands gathered around, most of them being on the side on which the two were about to descend. The Reverend Saul had just stepped to the ground. The Baron was just preparing to follow. The brigands were impatient to secure them, when suddenly, with a quick movement, the Baron gave a spring out of the opposite side of the carriage, and leaped to the ground. The brigands were taken completely by surprise, and before they could prepare to follow him, he had sprung into the forest, and, with long bounds, was rushing up the steep hill and out of sight.

One shot was fired after him, and that was the shot that Hawbury and Dacres heard. Two men sprang after him with the hope of catching him.

In a few moments a loud cry was heard from the woods.

"MIN!"

Minnie heard it; a gleam of light flashed from her eyes, a smile of triumph came over her lips.

"Wha-a-a-a-t?" she called in reply.

"Wa-a-a-a-a-a-it!" was the cry that came back—and this was the cry that Hawbury and Dacres had heard.

"Sacr-r-r-r-r-remento!" growled Girasole.

"I'm sure *I* don't know what he means by telling me that," said Minnie. "How can *I* wait if this horrid Italian won't let me? I'm sure he might be more considerate."

Poor Mrs. Willoughby, who had for a moment been roused to hope by the escape of the Baron, now fell again into despair, and wept and moaned and clung to Minnie. Lady Dalrymple still lay senseless, in spite of the efforts of Ethel and the maids. The occurrence had been more to her than a mere encounter with brigands. It was the thought of her own carelessness that overwhelmed her. In an instant the thought of the Baron's warning and his solemn entreaties flashed across her memory. She recollected how Hawbury had commended his friend, and how she had turned from these to put her trust in the driver and Girasole, the very men who had betrayed her. These were the thoughts that overwhelmed her.

But now there arose once more the noise of rolling wheels, advancing more swiftly than the last, accompanied by the lash of a whip and shouts of a human voice. Girasole spoke to his men, and they moved up nearer to the bend, and stood in readiness there.

What Hawbury's motive was it is not difficult to tell. He was not armed, and therefore could not hope to do much; but he had in an instant resolved to rush thus into the midst of the danger. First of all he thought that a struggle might be going on between the drivers, the other travelers, and the brigands; in which event his assistance would be of great value. Though unarmed, he thought he might catch or wrest a weapon from some one of the enemy. In addition to this, he wished to strike a blow to save the ladies from captivity, even if his blow should be unavailing. Even if he had known how matters were, he would probably have acted in precisely the same way. As for Dacres, he had but one idea. He was sure it

was some trick concocted by his wife and the Italian, though why they should do so he did not stop, in his mad mood, to inquire. A vague idea that a communication had passed between them on the preceding evening with reference to this was now in his mind, and his vengeful feeling was stimulated by this thought to the utmost pitch of intensity.

Hawbury thus lashed his horses, and they flew along the road. After the first cry and the shot that they had heard there was no further noise. The stillness was mysterious. It showed Hawbury that the struggle, if there had been any, was over. But the first idea still remained both in his own mind and in that of Dacres. On they went, and now they came to the turn in the road. Round this they whirled, and in an instant the scene revealed itself.

Three carriages stopped; some drivers standing and staring indifferently; a group of women crowding around a prostrate form that lay in the road; a pale, beautiful girl, to whom a beautiful woman was clinging passionately; a crowd of armed brigands with leveled pieces; and immediately before them a horseman—the Italian, Girasole.

One glance showed all this. Hawbury could not distinguish any face among the crowd of women that bent over Lady Dalrymple, and Ethel's face was thus still unrevealed; but he saw Minnie and Mrs. Willoughby and Girasole.

"What the devil's all this about?" asked Hawbury, haughtily, as his horses stopped at the Baron's carriage.

"You are prisoners—" began Girasole.

But before he could say another word he was interrupted by a cry of fury from Dacres, who, the moment that he had recognized him, sprang to his feet, and with a long, keen knife in his hand, leaped from the carriage into the midst of the brigands, striking right and left, and endeavoring to force his way toward Girasole. In an instant Hawbury was by his side. Two men fell beneath the fierce thrusts of Dacres's knife, and Hawbury tore the rifle from a third. With the clubbed end of this he began dealing blows right and left. The men fell back and leveled their pieces. Dacres sprang forward, and was within three steps of Girasole—his face full of ferocity, his eyes flashing, and looking not so much like an English gentleman as one of the old vikings in a Berserker rage. One more spring brought him closer to Girasole. The Italian retreated. One of his men flung himself before Dacres and tried to grapple with him. The next instant he fell with a groan, stabbed to the heart. With a yell of rage the others rushed upon Dacres; but the latter was now suddenly seized with a new idea. Turning for an instant he held his assailants at bay; and then, seizing the opportunity, sprang into the woods and ran. One or two shots were fired, and then half a dozen men gave chase.

Meanwhile one or two shots had been fired at Hawbury, but, in the confusion, they had not taken effect. Suddenly, as he stood with uplifted rifle ready to strike, his enemies made a simultaneous rush upon him. He was seized by a dozen strong arms. He struggled fiercely, but his efforts were unavailing. The odds were too great. Before long he was thrown to the ground on his face, and his arms bound behind him. After this he was gagged.

The uproar of this fierce struggle had roused all the ladies, and they turned their eyes in horror to where the two were fighting against such odds. Ethel raised herself on her knees from beside Lady Dalrymple, and caught sight of Hawbury. For a moment she remained motionless; and then she saw the escape of Dacres, and Hawbury going down in the grasp of his assailants. She gave a loud shriek and rushed forward. But Girasole intercepted her.

"Go back," he said. "De milor is my prisoner. Back, or you will be bound."

And at a gesture from him two of the men advanced to seize Ethel.

"Back!" he said, once more, in a stern voice. "You mus be tenif to miladi."

Ethel shrank back.

The sound of that scream had struck on Hawbury's ears, but he did not recognize it. If he thought of it at all, he supposed it was the scream of common terror from one of the women. He was sore and bruised and fast bound. He was held down also in such a way that he could not see the party of ladies. The Baron's carriage intercepted the view, for he had fallen behind this during the final struggle. After a little time he was allowed to sit up, but still he could not see beyond.

There was now some delay, and Girasole gave some orders to his men. The ladies waited with fearful apprehensions. They listened eagerly to hear if there might not be some sounds of approaching help. But no such sounds came to gladden their hearts. Lady Dalrymple, also, still lay senseless; and Ethel, full of the direst anxiety about Hawbury, had to return to renew her efforts toward reviving her aunt.

Before long the brigands who had been in pursuit of the fugitives returned to the road. They did not bring back either of them. A dreadful question arose in the minds of the ladies as to the meaning of this. Did it mean that the fugitives had escaped, or had been shot down in the woods by their wrathful pursuers? It was impossible for them to find out. Girasole went over to them and conversed with them apart. The men all looked sullen; but whether that arose from disappointed vengeance or gratified ferocity it was impossible for them to discern.

The brigands now turned their attention to their own men. Two of these had received bad but not dangerous wounds from the dagger of Dacres, and the scowls of pain and rage which they threw upon Hawbury and the other captives boded nothing but the most cruel fate to all of them. Another, however, still lay there. It was the one who had intercepted

Dacres in his ru
tionless in a poo
over. His whit
posed to view, ex
of death, and a
his fate had met

The brigands
vanced toward
them with perfe
their rifles, some
aim, swearing a
like maniacs.

Hawbury, how
of his face, nor d
ing of any kind.
and his clothes w
mud, and his hand
was gagged; but
astonished his ene
this coolness his b
out—in which cas
have been written;
his look which m
Girasole time to i
my story from ruin

THE MÊLÉE.

Dacres in his rush upon Girasole. He lay motionless in a pool of blood. They turned him over. His white, rigid face, as it became exposed to view, exhibited the unmistakable mark of death, and a gash on his breast showed how his fate had met him.

The brigands uttered loud cries, and advanced toward Hawbury. He sat regarding them with perfect indifference. They raised their rifles, some clubbing them, others taking aim, swearing and gesticulating all the time like maniacs.

Hawbury, however, did not move a muscle of his face, nor did he show the slightest feeling of any kind. He was covered with dust, and his clothes were torn and splashed with mud, and his hands were bound, and his mouth was gagged; but he preserved a coolness that astonished his enemies. Had it not been for this coolness his brains might have been blown out—in which case this narrative would never have been written; but there was something in his look which made the Italians pause, gave Girasole time to interfere, and thus preserved my story from ruin.

Girasole then came up and made his men stand back. They obeyed sullenly.

Girasole removed the gag.

Then he stood and looked at Hawbury. Hawbury sat and returned his look with his usual nonchalance, regarding the Italian with a cold, steady stare, which produced upon the latter its usual maddening effect.

"Milor will be ver glad to hear," said he, with a mocking smile, "dat de mees will be take good care to. Milor was attentif to de mees; but de mees haf been fiancée to me, an' so I take dis occazione to mak her mine. I sall love her, an' se sall love me. I haf save her life, an' se haf been fiancée to me since den."

Now Girasole had chosen to say this to Hawbury from the conviction that Hawbury was Minnie's lover, and that the statement of this would inflict a pang upon the heart of his supposed rival which would destroy his coolness. Thus he chose rather to strike at Hawbury's jealousy than at his fear or at his pride.

But he was disappointed. Hawbury heard his statement with utter indifference.

"Well," said he, "all I can say is that it seems to me to be a devilish odd way of going to work about it."

"Aha!" said Girasole, fiercely. "You sall see. So sall be mine. Aha!"

Hawbury made no reply, and Girasole, after a gesture of impatience, walked off, baffled.

In a few minutes two men came up to Hawbury, and led him away to the woods on the left.

"THEY SAW A RUINED HOUSE."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AMONG THE BRIGANDS.

Girasole now returned to the ladies. They were in the same position in which he had left them. Mrs. Willoughby with Minnie, and Ethel, with the maids, attending to Lady Dalrymple.

"Ladies," said Girasole, "I beg your attension. I had de honore to inform you dat dis mees is my prisoner. So haf give me her heart an' her hand. I love mees. I love her. I was prevent from see her so I haf to take her in dis manner. I feel sad at de pain I haf give you, an' also I was dat it was inevitable. You sall not be troubled more. You are free. Mees," he continued, taking Minnie's hand, "you haf promis me dis fair han', an' you are mine. You come to one who loves you bettaire dan life, an' who you love. You owe youair life to me. I sall make it so happy as nevair was."

"I'm sure *I* don't want to be happy," said Minnie. "I don't *want* to leave darling Kitty—and it's a shame—and you'll make me *hate* you if you do so."

"Miladi," said Girasole to Mrs. Willoughby, "de mees says se not want to leaf you. Eef you want to come, you may come an' be our sistaire."

"Oh, Kitty darling, you won't leave me, will you, all alone with this horrid man?" said Minnie.

"My darling," moaned Mrs. Willoughby, "how can I? I'll go. Oh, my sweet sister, what misery!"

"Oh, now that will be really *quite* delightful if you *will* come, Kitty darling. Only I'm afraid you'll find it awfully uncomfortable."

Girasole turned once more to the other ladies.

"I beg you will assura de miladi when she recovaire of my considerazion de mos distingue, an' convey to her dé regrettas dat I haf. Miladi," he continued, addressing Ethel, "you are free, an' can go. You will not be molest by me. You sall go safe. You haf not ver far. You sall fin' houses dere—forward—before—not far."

With these words he turned away.

"You mus come wit me," he said to Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie. "Come. Eet ees not ver far."

He walked slowly into the woods on the left, and the two sisters followed him. Of the two Minnie was far the more cool and collected. She was as composed as usual; and, as there was no help for it, she walked on. Mrs. Willoughby, however, was terribly agitated, and wept and shuddered and moaned incessantly.

"Kitty darling," said Minnie, "I *wish* you wouldn't go on so. You really make me feel quite nervous. I never saw you so bad in my life."

"Poor Minnie! Poor child! Poor sweet child!"

"Well, if I am a child, you needn't go and tell me about it all the time. It's really quite horrid."

Mrs. Willoughby said no more. She generously tried to repress her own feelings so not to give distress to her sister.

After the Count had entered the wood with the two sisters the drivers removed the horses from the carriages and went away, led off by the man who had driven the ladies. This was the man whose stolid face had seemed likely to belong to an honest man, but who now was shown to belong to the opposite class. These men went down the road over which they had come, leaving the carriages there with the ladies and their maids.

Girasole now led the way, and Minnie and her sister followed him. The wood was very thick, and grew more so as they advanced, but there was not much underbrush, and progress was not difficult. Several times a wild thought of flight came to Mrs. Willoughby, but was at once dispelled by a helpless sense of its utter impossibility. How could she persuade the impracticable Minnie, who seemed so free from all concern? or, if she could persuade her, how could she accomplish her desire? She would

at once be pursued and surrounded, while, even if she did manage to escape, how could she ever find her way to any place of refuge? Every minute, also, drew them deeper and deeper into the woods, and the path was a winding one, in which she soon became bewildered, until at last all sense of her whereabouts was utterly gone. At last, even the idea of escaping ceased to suggest itself, and there remained only a dull despair, a sense of utter helplessness and hopelessness, the sense of one who is going to his doom.

Girasole said nothing whatever, but led the way in silence, walking slowly enough to accommodate the ladies, and sometimes holding an overhanging branch to prevent it from springing back in their faces. Minnie walked on lightly, and with an elastic step, looking around with evident interest upon the forest. Once a passing lizard drew from her a pretty little shriek of alarm, thus showing that while she was so calm in the face of real and frightful danger, she could be alarmed by even the most innocent object that affected her fancy. Mrs. Willoughby thought that she understood Minnie before, but this little shriek at a lizard, from one who smiled at the brigands, struck her as a problem quite beyond her power to solve.

The woods now began to grow thinner. The trees were larger and farther apart, and rose all around in columnar array, so that it was possible to see between them to a greater distance. At length there appeared before them, through the trunks of the trees, the gleam of water. Mrs. Willoughby noticed this, and wondered what it might be. At first she thought it was a harbor on the coast; then she thought it was some river; but finally, on coming nearer, she saw that it was a lake. In a few minutes after they first caught sight of it they had reached its banks.

It was a most beautiful and sequestered spot. All around were high wooded eminences, beyond whose undulating summits arose the towering forms of the Apennine heights. Among these hills lay a little lake about a mile in length and breadth, whose surface was as smooth as glass, and reflected the surrounding shores. On their right, as they descended, they saw some figures moving, and knew them to be the brigands, while on their left they saw a ruined house. Toward this Girasole led them.

The house stood on the shore of the lake. It was of stone, and was two stories in height. The roof was still good, but the windows were gone. There was no door, but half a dozen or so of the brigands stood there, and formed a sufficient guard to prevent the escape of any prisoner. These men had dark, wicked eyes and sullen faces, which afforded fresh terror to Mrs. Willoughby. She had thought, in her desperation, of making some effort to escape by bribing the men, but the thorough-bred rascality which was evinced in the faces of these ruffians showed her that they were the very fellows who would take her money and cheat her afterward. If she had been able to speak Italian, she might have secured their services by the prospect of some future reward after escaping; but, as it was, she could not speak a word of the language, and thus could not enter upon even the preliminaries of an escape.

On reaching the house the ruffians stood aside, staring hard at them. Mrs. Willoughby shrank in terror from the baleful glances of their eyes; but Minnie looked at them calmly and innocently, and not without some of that curiosity which a child shows when he first sees a Chinaman or an Arab in the streets. Girasole then led the way up stairs to a room on the second story.

It was an apartment of large size, extending across the house, with a window at each end, and two on the side. On the floor there was a heap of straw, over which some skins were thrown. There were no chairs, nor was there any table.

"Scusa me," said Girasole, "miladi, for dis accommodazion. It gifs me pain, but I promise it sall not be long. Only dis day an' dis night here. I haf to detain you dat time. Den we sall go to where I haf a home fitter for de bride. I haf a home wharra you sall be a happy bride, mees—"

"But I don't want to stay here *at all* in such a horrid place," said Minnie, looking around in disgust.

"Only dis day an' dis night," imploringly. "Aftaire you sall have all you sall wis."

"Well, at any rate, I think it's very horrid in you to shut me up here. You might let me walk outside in the woods. I'm so *awfully* fond of the woods."

Girasole smiled faintly.

"And so you sall have plenty of de wood—but to-morra. You wait here now. All safe—oh yes—secura—all aright—oh yes—slip to-night, an' in de mornin' early you sall be mine. Dere sall come a priest, an' we sall have de ceremony."

"Well, I think it was very unkind in you to bring me to such a horrid place. And how can I sit down? You *might* have had a chair. And look at poor, darling Kitty. You may be unkind to me, but you needn't make *her* sit on the floor. You never saved *her* life, and you have no right to be unkind to her."

"Unkind! Oh, mees!—my heart, my life, all arra yonairs, an' I lay my life at yonair foot."

"I think it would be far more kind if you would put a chair at poor Kitty's feet," retorted Minnie, with some show of temper.

"But, oh, carissima, tink—de wild wood—noting here—no, noting—not a chair—only de straw."

"Then you had no business to bring me here. You might have known that there were no chairs here. I can't sit down on nothing. But I suppose you expect me to stand up. And if that isn't horrid, I don't know what is. I'm sure I don't know what poor dear papa would say if he were to see me now."

"WHAT IS THIS FOR?".

"Do not grieve, carissima mia—do not, charming mees, decompose yourself. To-morra you sall go to a bettaire place, an' I will carra you to my castello. You sall haf every wan, you sall enjoy every wis, you sall be happy."

"But I don't see how I can be happy without a chair," reiterated Minnie, in whose mind this one grievance now became pre-eminent. "You talk as though you think I am made of stone or iron, and you think I can stand here all day or all night, and you want me to sleep on that horrid straw and those horrid furry things. I suppose this is the castle that you speak of; and I'm sure I wonder why you *ever* thought of bringing me here. I suppose it doesn't make so much difference about a *carpet*; but you will not even let me have a *chair*; and I think you're very unkind."

Girasole was in despair. He stood in thought for some time. He felt that Minnie's rebuke was deserved. If she had reproached him with waylaying her and carrying her off, he could have borne it, and could have found a reply. But such a charge as this was unanswerable. It certainly was very hard that she should not be able to sit down. But then how was it possible for him to find a chair in the woods? It was an insoluble problem. How in the world could he satisfy her?

Minnie's expression also was most touching. The fact that she had no chair to sit on seemed to absolutely overwhelm her. The look that she gave Girasole was so piteous, so reproachful, so heart-rending, that his soul actually quaked, and a thrill of remorse passed all through his frame. He felt a cold chill running to the very marrow of his bones.

"I think you're *very, very* unkind," said Minnie, "and I really don't see how I can *ever* speak to you again."

This was too much. Girasole turned away. He rushed down stairs. He wandered frantically about. He looked in all directions for a chair. There was plenty of wood certainly—for all around he saw the vast forest—but of what use was it? He could not transform a tree into a chair. He communicated his difficulty to some of the men. They shook their heads helplessly. At last he saw the stump of

a tree which was of such a shape that it looked as though it might be used as a seat. It was his only resource, and he seized it. Calling two or three of the men, he had the stump carried to the old house. He rushed up stairs to acquaint Minnie with his success, and to try to console her. She listened in coldness to his hasty words. The men who were carrying the stump came up with a clump and a clatter, breathing hard, for the stump was very heavy, and finally placed it on the landing in front of Minnie's door. On reaching that spot it was found that it would not go in.

Minnie heard the noise and came out. She looked at the stump, then at the men and then at Girasole.

"What is this for?" she asked.

"Eet—eet ees for a chair."

"A chair!" exclaimed Minnie. "Why, it's nothing but a great big, horrid, ugly old stump, and—"

Her remarks ended in a scream. She turned and ran back into the room.

"What—what is de mattaire?" cried the Count, looking into the room with a face pale with anxiety.

"Oh, take it away! take it away!" cried Minnie, in terror.

"What? what?"

"Take it away! take it away!" she repeated.

"But eet ees for you—eet ees a seat."

"I don't want it. I won't have it!" cried Minnie. "It's full of horrid ants and things. And it's dreadful—and *very, very* cruel in you to bring them up here just to *tease* me, when you *know* I hate them so. Take it away! take it away! oh, do please take it away! And oh, do please go away yourself, and leave me with dear, darling Kitty. *She* never teases me. She is *always* kind."

Girasole turned away once more, in fresh trouble. He had the stump carried off, and then he wandered away. He was quite at a loss what to do. He was desperately in love, and it was a very small request for Minnie to make, and he was in that state of mind when it would be a happiness to grant her slightest wish; but here he found himself in a difficulty from which he could find no possible means of escape.

"And now, Kitty darling," said Minnie, after Girasole had gone—"now you see how very, very wrong you were to be so opposed to that dear, good, kind, nice Rufus K. Gunn. *He* would never have treated me so. *He* would never have taken me to a place like this—a horrid old house by a horrid damp pond, without doors and windows, just like a beggar's house—and then put me in a room without a chair to sit on when I'm so *awfully* tired. He was *always* kind to me, and that was the reason you hated him so, because you couldn't bear to have people kind to me. And I'm *so* tired."

"Come, then, poor darling. I'll make a nice seat for you out of these skins."

And Mrs. Willoughby began to fold some of them up and lay them one upon the other.

"What is that for, Kitty dear?" asked Minnie.

"To make you a nice, soft seat, dearest."

"But I don't want them, and I won't sit on the horrid things," said Minnie.

"But, darling, they are as soft as a cushion. See!" And her sister pressed her hand on them, so as to show how soft they were.

"I don't think they're soft *at all*," said Minnie; "and I wish you wouldn't tease me so, when I'm *so* tired."

"Then come, darling; I will sit on them, and you shall sit on my knees."

"But I don't want to go near those horrid furry things. They belong to cows and things. I think *every body's* unkind to me to-day."

"Minnie, dearest, you really wound me when you talk in that way. Be reasonable now. See what pains I take. I do all I can for you."

"But I'm *always* reasonable, and it's *you* that are unreasonable, when you want me to sit on that horrid fur. It's very, *very* disagreeable in you, Kitty dear."

Mrs. Willoughby said nothing, but went on folding some more skins. These she placed on the straw so that a pile was formed about as high as an ordinary chair. This pile was placed against the wall so that the wall served as a support.

Then she seated herself upon this.

"Minnie, dearest," said she.

"Well, Kitty darling."

"It's really quite soft and comfortable. Do come and sit on it; do, just to please me, only for five minutes. See! I'll spread my dress over it so that you need not touch it. Come, dearest, only for five minutes."

"Well, I'll sit on it just for a little mite of a time, if you promise not to tease me."

"Tease you, dear! Why, of course not. Come."

So Minnie went over and sat by her sister's side.

In about an hour Girasole came back. The two sisters were seated there. Minnie's head was resting on her sister's shoulder, and she was fast asleep, while Mrs. Willoughby sat motionless, with her face turned toward him, and such an expression in her dark eyes that Girasole felt awed. He turned in silence and went away.

CHAPTER XXV.

SEEKING FOR HELP.

The departure of the drivers with their horses had increased the difficulties of the party, and had added to their danger. Of that party Ethel was now the head, and her efforts were directed more zealously than ever to bring back Lady Dalrymple to her senses. At last these efforts were crowned with success, and, after being senseless for nearly an hour, she

"ETHEL OBTAINED A PAIR OF SCISSORS."

came to herself. The restoration of her senses, however, brought with it the discovery of all that had occurred, and thus caused a new rush of emotion, which threatened painful consequences. But the consequences were averted, and at length she was able to rise. She was then helped into her carriage, after which the question arose as to their next proceeding.

The loss of the horses and drivers was a very embarrassing thing to them, and for a time they were utterly at a loss what course to adopt. Lady Dalrymple was too weak to walk, and they had no means of conveying her. The maids had simply lost their wits from fright; and Ethel could not see her way clearly out of the difficulty. At this juncture they were roused by the approach of the Rev. Saul Tozer.

This reverend man had been bound as he descended from his carriage, and had remained bound ever since. In that state he had been a spectator of the struggle and its consequences, and he now came forward to offer his services.

"I don't know whether you remember me, ma'am," said he to Lady Dalrymple, "but I looked in at your place at Rome; and in any case I am bound to offer you my assistance, since you are companions with me in my bonds, which I'd be much obliged if one of you ladies would untie or cut. Perhaps it would be best to untie it, as rope's valuable."

At this request Ethel obtained a pair of scissors from one of the maids, and after vigorous efforts succeeded in freeing the reverend gentleman.

"Really, Sir, I am very much obliged for this kind offer," said Lady Dalrymple, "and I avail myself of it gratefully. Can you advise us what is best to do?"

"Well, ma'am, I've been turning it over in my mind, and have made it a subject of prayer; and it seems to me that it wouldn't be bad to go out and see the country."

"There are no houses for miles," said Ethel.

"Have you ever been this road before?" said Tozer.

"No."

"Then how do you know?"

"Oh, I was thinking of the part we had passed over."

"True; but the country in front may be different. Didn't that brigand captain say something about getting help ahead?"

"Yes, so he did; I remember now," said Ethel.

"Well, I wouldn't take his advice generally, but in this matter I don't see any harm in following it; so I move that I be a committee of one to go ahead and investigate the country and bring help."

"Oh, thanks, thanks, very much. Really, Sir, this is very kind," said Lady Dalrymple.

"And I'll go too," said Ethel, as a sudden thought occurred to her. "Would you be afraid, aunty dear, to stay here alone?"

"Certainly not, dear. I have no more fear for myself, but I'm afraid to trust you out of my sight."

"Oh, you need not fear for me," said Ethel. "I shall certainly be as safe farther on as I am here. Besides, if we can find help I will know best what is wanted."

"Well, dear, I suppose you may go."

Without further delay Ethel started off, and Tozer walked by her side. They went under the fallen tree, and then walked quickly along the road.

"Do you speak Italian, miss?" asked Tozer.

"No."

"I'm sorry for that. I don't either. I'm told it's a fine language."

"So I believe; but how very awkward it will be not to be able to speak to any person!"

"Well, the Italian is a kind of offshoot of the Latin, and I can scrape together a few Latin words—enough to make myself understood, I do believe."

"Can you, really? How very fortunate!"

"It is somewhat providential, miss, and I hope I may succeed."

They walked on in silence now for some time. Ethel was too sad to talk, and Tozer was busily engaged in recalling all the Latin at his command. After a while he began to grow sociable.

"Might I ask, miss, what persuasion you are?"

"Persuasion?" said Ethel, in surprise.

"Yes, 'm; de-nomination—religious body, you know."

"Oh! why, I belong to the Church."

"Oh! and what church did you say, 'm?"

"The Church of England."

"H'm. The 'Piscopalian body. Well, it's a high-toned body."

Ethel gave a faint smile at this whimsical application of a name to her church, and then Tozer returned to the charge.

"Are you a professor?"

"A what?"

"A professor."

"A professor?" repeated Ethel. "I don't think I *quite* understand you."

"Well, do you belong to the church? Are you a member?"

"Oh yes."

"I'm glad to hear it. It's a high and a holy and a happy perrivelege to belong to the church and enjoy the means of grace. I trust you live up to your perriveleges?"

"Live what?" asked Ethel.

"Live up to your perriveleges," repeated Tozer—"attend on all the means of grace—be often at the assembling of yourself together."

"The assembling of myself together? I don't think I *quite* get your meaning," said Ethel.

"Meeting, you know—church-meeting."

"Oh yes; I didn't understand. Oh yes, I always go to church."

"That's right," said Tozer, with a sigh of relief; "and I suppose, now, you feel an interest in the cause of missions?"

"Missions? Oh, I don't know. The Roman Catholics practice that to some extent, and several of my friends say they feel benefit from a mission once a year; but for my part I have not yet any very decided leanings to Roman Catholicism."

"Oh, dear me, dear me!" cried Tozer, "that's not what I mean at all; I mean Protestant missions to the heathen, you know."

"I beg your pardon," said Ethel. "I thought you were referring to something else."

Tozer was silent now for a few minutes, and then asked her, abruptly,

"What's your opinion about the Jews?"

"The Jews?" exclaimed Ethel, looking at him in some surprise, and thinking that her companion must be a little insane to carry on such an extraordinary conversation with such very abrupt changes—"the Jews?"

"Yes, the Jews."

"Oh, I don't like them at all."

"But they're the chosen people."

"I can't help that. I don't like them. But then, you know, I never really saw much of them."

"I refer to their future prospects," said Tozer—"to prophecy. I should like to ask you how you regard them in that light. Do you believe in a spiritual or a temporal Zion?"

"Spiritual Zion? Temporal Zion?"

"Yes, 'm."

"Well, really, I don't know. I don't think I believe any thing at all about it."

"But you *must* believe in either one or the other—you've *got* to," said Tozer, positively.

"But I *don't*, you know; and how can I?"

Tozer threw at her a look of commiseration, and began to think that his companion was not much better than a heathen. In his own home circle he could have put his hand on little girls of ten who were quite at home on all these subjects. He was silent for a time, and then began again.

"I'd like to ask you one thing," said he, "very much."

"What is it?" asked Ethel.

"Do you believe," asked Tozer, solemnly, "that we're living in the Seventh Vial?"

"Vial? Seventh Vial?" said Ethel, in fresh amazement.

"Yes, the Seventh Vial," said Tozer, in a sepulchral voice.

"Living in the Seventh Vial? I really don't know how one can live in a vial."

"The Great Tribulation, you know."

"Great Tribulation?"

"Yes; for instance, now, don't you believe in the Apocalyptic Beast?"

"I don't know," said Ethel, faintly.

"Well, at any rate, you believe in his number—you must."

"His number?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, the number six, six, six—six hundred and sixty-six."

"I really don't understand this," said Ethel.

"Don't you believe that the Sixth Vial is done?"

"Sixth Vial? What, another vial?"

"Yes; and the drying of the Euphrates."

"The Euphrates? drying?" repeated Ethel in a trembling voice. She began to be alarmed. She felt sure that this man was insane. She had never heard such incoherency in her life. And she was alone with him. She stole a timid look, and saw his long, sallow face, on which there was now a preoccupied expression, and the look did not reassure her.

But Tozer himself was a little puzzled, and felt sure that his companion must have her own opinions on the subject, so he began again:

"Now I suppose you've read Fleming on the Papacy?"

"No, I haven't. I never heard of it."

"Strange, too. You've heard of Elliot's 'Horæ Apocalypticæ,' I suppose?"

"No," said Ethel, timidly.

"Well, it's all in Cumming—and you've read him, of course?"

"Cumming? I never heard of him. Who is he?"

"What, never heard of Cumming?"

"Never."

"And never read his 'Great Tribulation?'"

"No."

"Nor his 'Great Expectation?'"

"No."

"What! not even his 'Apocalyptic Sketches?'"

"I never heard of them."

Tozer looked at her in astonishment; but as

"TONITRUENDUM EST MALUM!"

this moment they came to a turn in the road, when a sight appeared which drew from Ethel an expression of joy.

It was a little valley on the right, in which was a small hamlet with a church. The houses were but small, and could not give them much accommodation, but they hoped to find help there.

"I wouldn't trust the people," said Ethel. "I dare say they're all brigands; but there ought to be a priest there, and we can appeal to him."

This proposal pleased Tozer, who resumed his work of collecting among the stores of his memory scraps of Latin which he had once stored away there.

The village was at no very great distance away from the road, and they reached it in a short time. They went at once to the church. The door was open, and a priest, who seemed the village priest, was standing there. He was stout, with a good-natured expression on his hearty, rosy face, and a fine twinkle in his eye, which lighted up pleasantly as he saw the strangers enter.

Tozer at once held out his hand and shook that of the priest.

"Buon giorno," said the priest.

Ethel shook her head.

"Parlate Italiano?" said he.

Ethel shook her head.

"Salve, domine," said Tozer, who at once plunged headlong into Latin.

"Salve bene," said the priest, in some surprise.

"Quomodo vales?" asked Tozer.

"Optime valeo, Dei gratia. Spero vos valere."

Tozer found the priest's pronunciation a little difficult, but managed to understand him.

"Domine," said he, "sumus viatores infelices et innocentes, in quos fures nuper impetum fecerunt. Omnia bona nostra arripuerunt—"

"Fieri non potest!" said the priest.

"Et omnes amicos nostros in captivitatem lachrymabilem tractaverunt—"

"Cor dolet," said the priest; "miseret me vestram."

"Cujusmodi terra est hæc in qua sustenendum est tot labores?"

The priest sighed.

"Tonitruendum est malum!" exclaimed Tozer, excited by the recollection of his wrongs.

The priest stared.

"In hostium manibus fuimus, et, bonum tonitru! omnia impedimenta amissimus. Est nimis omnipotens malum!"

"Quid vis dicere?" said the priest, looking puzzled. "Quid tibi vis?"

"Est nimis sempiternum durum!"

"In nomine omnium sanctorum apostolorumque," cried the priest, "quid vis dicere?"

"Potes ne juvare nos," continued Tozer, "in hoc lachrymabile tempore? Volo unum verum vivum virum qui possit—"

"Diabolus arripiat me si possim unum solum verbum intelligere!" cried the priest. "Be jabers if I ondherstan' yez at all at all; an' there ye have it."

And with this the priest raised his head, with its puzzled look, and scratched that organ with such a natural air, and with such a full Irish flavor in his brogue and in his face, that both of his visitors were perfectly astounded.

"Good gracious!" cried Tozer; and seizing the priest's hand in both of his, he nearly wrung it off. "Why, what a providence! Why, really, now! And you were an Irishman all the time! And why didn't you speak English?"

"Sure and what made you spake Latin?" cried the priest. "And what was it you were thryin' to say wid yer 'sempiternum durum,' and yer 'tonitruendum malum?' Sure an' ye made me fairly profeen wid yer talk, so ye did."

"Well, I dare say," said Tozer, candidly—"I dare say 'tain't onlikely that I *did* introduce one or two Americanisms in the Latin; but then, you know, I ain't been in practice."

The priest now brought chairs for his visitors, and, sitting thus in the church, they told him about their adventures, and entreated him to do something for them. To all this the priest listened with thoughtful attention, and when they were done he at once promised to find horses for them which would draw the carriages to this hamlet or to the next town. Ethel did not think Lady Dalrymple could go further than this place, and the priest offered to find some accommodations.

He then left them, and in about half an hour he returned with two or three peasants, each of whom had a horse.

"They'll be able to bring the leedies," said the priest, "and haul the impty wagons afther thim."

"I think, miss," said Tozer, "that you'd better stay here. It's too far for you to walk."

"Sure an' there's no use in the wide wurruld for you to be goin' back," said the priest to Ethel. "You can't do any gud, an' you'd bether rist till they come. Yer frind 'll be enough."

Ethel at first thought of walking back, but finally she saw that it would be quite useless, and so she resolved to remain and wait for her aunt. So Tozer went off with the men and the horses, and the priest asked Ethel all about the affair once more. Whatever his opinions were, he said nothing.

While he was talking there came a man to the door who beckoned him out. He went out, and was gone for some time. He came back at last, looking very serious.

"I've just got a missage from thim," said he.

"A message," exclaimed Ethel, "from them? What, from Girasole?"

"Yis. They want a praste, and they've sint for me."

"A priest?"

"Yis; an' they want a maid-servant to wait on the young leedies; and they want thim immajitly; an' I'll have to start off soon. There's a man dead among thim that wants to be put undherground to-night, for the rist av thim are goin' off in the mornin'; an' accordin' to all I hear, I wouldn't wondher but what I'd be wanted for somethin' else afore mornin'."

"Oh, my God!" cried Ethel; "they're going to kill him, then!"

"Kill him! Kill who? Sure an' it's not killin' they want me for. It's the other—it's marryin'."

"Marrying?" cried Ethel. "Poor, darling Minnie! Oh, you can not—you will not marry them?"

"Sure an' I don't know but it's the best thing I can do—as things are," said the priest.

"Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do!" moaned Ethel.

"Well, ye've got to bear up, so ye have. There's throubles for all of us, an' lots av thim too; an' more'n some av us can bear."

Ethel sat in the darkest and bitterest grief for some time, a prey to thoughts and fears that were perfect agony to her.

At last a thought came to her which made her start, and look up, and cast at the priest a look full of wonder and entreaty. The priest watched her with the deepest sympathy visible on his face.

"We must save them!" she cried.

"Sure an' it's me that made up me moind to that same," said the priest, "only I didn't want to rise yer hopes."

"*We* must save them," said Ethel, with strong emphasis.

"*We?* What can you do?"

Ethel got up, walked to the church door, looked out, came back, looked anxiously all around, and then, resuming her seat, she drew close to the priest, and began to whisper, long and anxiously.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE AVENGER ON THE TRACK.

When Dacres had sprung aside into the woods in the moment of his fierce rush upon Girasole, he had been animated by a sudden thought that escape for himself was possible, and that it would be more serviceable to his friends

Thus, then, he had bounded into the woods, and with swift steps he forced his way among the trees deeper and deeper into the forest. Some of the brigands had given chase, but without effect. Dacres's superior strength and agility gave him the advantage, and his love of life was a greater stimulus than their thirst for vengeance. In addition to this the trees gave every assistance toward the escape of a fugitive, while they threw every impediment in the way of a pursuer. The consequence was, therefore, that Dacres soon put a great distance between himself and his pursuers, and, what is more, he ran in such a circuitous route that they soon lost all idea of their own locality, and had not the faintest idea where he had gone. In this respect, however, Dacres himself was not one whit wiser than they, for he soon found himself completely bewildered in the mazes of the forest; and when at length the deep silence around gave no further sound of pursuers, he sank down to take breath, with no idea whatever in what direction the road lay.

After a brief rest he arose and plunged deeper still into the forest, so as to put an additional distance between himself and any possible pursuit. He at length found himself at the foot of a precipice about fifty feet in height, which was deep in the recesses of the forest. Up this he climbed, and found a mossy place among the trees at its top, where he could find rest, and at the same time be in a more favorable position either for hearing or seeing any signs of approaching pursuers.

Here, then, he flung himself down to rest, and soon buried himself among thoughts of the most exciting kind. The scene which he had just left was fresh in his mind, and amidst all the fury of that strife there rose most prominent in his memory the form of the two ladies, Minnie standing calm and unmoved, while Mrs. Willoughby was convulsed with agitated feeling. What was the cause of that? Could it be possible that his wife had indeed contrived such a plot with the Italian? Was it possible that she had chosen this way of striking two blows, by one of which she could win her Italian, and by the other of which she could get rid of himself, her husband? Such had been his conjecture during the fury of the fight, and the thought had roused him up to his Berserker madness; but now, as it recurred again, he saw other things to shake his full belief. Her agitation seemed too natural.

Yet, on the other hand, he asked himself, why should she not show agitation? She was a consummate actress. She could show on her beautiful face the softness and the tenderness of an angel of light while a demon reigned in her malignant heart. Why should she not choose this way of keeping up appearances? She had betrayed her friends, and sought her husband's death; but would she wish to have her crime made manifest? Not she. It was for this, then, that she wept and clung to the child-angel.

Such thoughts as these were not at all adapted to give comfort to his mind, or make his rest refreshing. Soon, by such fancies, he kindled anew his old rage, and his blood rose to fever heat, so that inaction became no longer tolerable. He had rest enough. He started up, and looked all around, and listened attentively. No sound arose and no sight appeared which at all excited suspicion. He determined to set forth once more, he scarcely knew where. He had a vague idea of finding his way back to the road, so as to be able to assist the ladies, together with another idea, equally ill defined, of coming upon the brigands, finding the Italian, and watching for an opportunity to wreak vengeance upon this assassin and his guilty partner.

He drew his knife once more from a leathern sheath on the inside of the breast of his coat, into which he had thrust it some time before, and holding this he set forth, watchfully and warily. On the left side of the precipice the ground sloped down, and at the bottom of this there was a narrow valley. It seemed to him that this might be the course of some spring torrent, and that by following its descent he might come out upon some stream. With this intention he descended to the valley, and then walked along, following the descent of the ground, and keeping himself as much as possible among the thickest growths of the trees.

The ground descended very gradually, and the narrow valley wound along among rolling hills that were covered with trees and brush. As he confined himself to the thicker parts of this, his progress was necessarily slow; but at the end of that turn he saw before him unmistakable signs of the neighborhood of some open place. Before him he saw the sky in such a way that it showed the absence of forest trees. He now moved on more cautiously, and, quitting the valley, he crept up the hill-slope among the brush as carefully as possible, until he was at a sufficient height, and then, turning toward the open, he crept forward from cover to cover. At length he stopped. A slight eminence was before him, beyond which all was open, yet concealed from his view. Descending the slope a little, he once more advanced, and finally emerged at the edge of the forest.

He found himself upon a gentle declivity. Immediately in front of him lay a lake, circular in shape, and about a mile in diameter, embosomed among wooded hills. At first he saw no signs of any habitation; but as his eyes wandered round he saw upon his right, about a quarter of a mile away, an old stone house, and beyond this smoke curling up from among the forest trees on the borders of the lake.

The scene startled him. It was so quiet, so lonely, and so deserted that it seemed a fit place for a robber's haunt. Could this be indeed the home of his enemies, and had he thus so wonderfully come upon them in the very midst of their retreat? He believed that it was so. A little further observation showed

figures among the trees moving to and fro, and soon he distinguished faint traces of smoke in other places, which he had not seen at first, as though there were more fires than one.

Dacres exulted with a fierce and vengeful joy over this discovery. He felt now not like the fugitive, but rather the pursuer. He looked down upon this as the tiger looks from his jungle upon some Indian village. His foes were numerous, but he was concealed, and his presence unsuspected. He grasped his dagger with a firmer clutch, and then pondered for a few minutes on what he had better do next.

One thing was necessary first of all, and that was to get as near as he possibly could without discovery. A slight survey of the situation showed him that he might venture much nearer; and his eye ran along the border of the lake which lay between him and the old house, and he saw that it was all covered over with a thick fringe of trees and brush-wood. The narrow valley along which he had come ended at the shore of the lake just below him on his right, and beyond this the shore arose again to a height equal to where he now was. To gain that opposite height was now his first task.

Before starting he looked all around, so as to be sure that he was not observed. Then he went back for some distance, after which he descended into the valley, crouching low, and crawling stealthily among the brush-wood. Moving thus, he at length succeeded in reaching the opposite slope without appearing to have attracted any attention from any pursuers. Up this slope he now moved as carefully as ever, not relaxing his vigilance one jot, but, if possible, calling into play even a larger caution as he found himself drawing nearer to those whom he began to regard as his prey.

Moving up this slope, then, in this way, he at length attained the top, and found himself here among the forest trees and underbrush. They were here even denser than they were on the place which he had just left. As he moved along he saw no indications that they had been traversed by human footsteps. Every thing gave indication of an unbroken and undisturbed solitude. After feeling his way along here with all the caution which he could exercise, he finally ventured toward the shore of the lake, and found himself able to go to the very edge without coming to any open space or crossing any path.

On looking forth from the top of the bank he found that he had not only drawn much nearer to the old house, but that he could see the whole line of shore. He now saw that there were some men by the door of the house, and began to suspect that this was nothing else than the headquarters and citadel of the brigands. The sight of the shore now showed him that he could approach very much nearer, and unless the brigands, or whoever they were, kept scouts out, he would be able to reach a point immediately overlooking the house, from which he could survey it at his leisure. To reach this point became now his next aim.

The wood being dense, Dacres found no more difficulty in passing through this than in traversing what lay behind him. The caution which he exercised here was as great as ever, and his progress was as slow, but as sure. At length he found himself upon the desired point, and, crawling cautiously forward to the shore, he looked down upon the very old house which he had desired to reach.

The house stood close by the lake, upon a sloping bank which lay below. It did not seem to be more than fifty yards away. The doors and windows were gone. Five or six ill-looking fellows were near the doorway, some sprawling on the ground, others lolling and lounging about. One glance at the men was sufficient to assure him that they were the brigands, and also to show him that they kept no guard or scout or outpost of any kind, at least in this direction.

Here, then, Dacres lay and watched. He could not wish for a better situation. With his knife in his hand, ready to defend himself in case of need, and his whole form concealed perfectly by the thick underbrush into the midst of which he had crawled, he peered forth through the overhanging leaves, and watched in breathless interest. From the point where he now was he could see the shore beyond the house, where the smoke was rising. He could now see that there were no less than four different columns of smoke ascending from as many fires. He saw as many as twenty or thirty figures moving among the trees, made conspicuous by the bright colors of their costumes. They seemed to be busy about something which he could not make out.

Suddenly, while his eye roved over the scene, it was struck by some fluttering color at the open window of the old house. He had not noticed this before. He now looked at it attentively. Before long he saw a figure cross the window and return. It was a female figure.

The sight of this revived all that agitation which he had felt before, but which had been calmed during the severe efforts which he had been putting forth. There was but one thought in his mind, and but one desire in his heart.

His wife.

He crouched low, with a more feverish dread of discovery at this supreme moment, and a fiercer thirst for some further revelation which might disclose what he suspected. His breathing came thick and hard, and his brow lowered gloomily over his gleaming eyes.

He waited thus for some minutes, and the figure passed again.

He still watched.

Suddenly a figure appeared at the window. It was a young girl, a blonde, with short golden curls. The face was familiar indeed to him. Could he ever forget it? There it was full before him, turned toward him, as though that one, by some strange spiritual sympathy,

was aware of his presence, and was thus turning toward him this mute appeal. Her face was near enough for its expression to be visible. He could distinguish the childish face, with its soft, sweet innocence, and he knew that upon it there was now that piteous, pleading, beseeching look which formerly had so thrilled his heart. And it was thus that Dacres saw his child-angel.

A prisoner, turning toward him this appeal! What was the cause, and what did the Italian want of this innocent child? Such was his thought. What could his fiend of a wife gain by the betrayal of that angelic being? Was it possible that even her demon soul could compass iniquity like this? He had thought that he had fathomed her capacity for malignant wickedness; but the presence here of the child-angel in the power of these miscreants showed him that this capacity was indeed unfathomable. At this sudden revelation of sin so enormous his very soul turned sick with horror.

He watched, and still looked with an anxiety that was increasing to positive pain.

And now, after one brief glance, Minnie drew back into the room. There was nothing more to be seen for some time, but at last another figure appeared.

He expected this; he was waiting for it; he was sure of it; yet deep down in the bottom of his heart there was a hope that it might not be so, that his suspicions, in this case at least, might be unfounded. But now the proof came; it was made manifest here before his eyes, and in the light of day.

In spite of himself a low groan escaped him. He buried his face in his hands and shut out the sight. Then suddenly he raised his head again and stared, as though in this face there was an irresistible fascination by which a spell was thrown over him.

It was the face of Mrs. Willoughby—youthful, beautiful, and touching in its tender grace. Tears were now in those dark, luminous eyes, but they were unseen by him. Yet he could mark the despondency of her attitude; he could see a certain wild way of looking up and down and in all directions; he noted how her hands grasped the window-ledge as if for support.

And oh, beautiful demon angel, he thought, if you could but know how near you are to the avenger! Why are you so anxious, my demon wife? Are you impatient because your Italian is delaying? Can you not live for five seconds longer without him? Are you looking in all directions to see where he is? Don't fret; he'll soon be here.

And now there came a confirmation of his thoughts. He was not surprised; he knew it; he suspected it. It was all as it should be. Was it not in the confident expectation of this that he had come here with his dagger—on their trail?

It was Girasole.

He came from the place, further along the shore, where the brigands were around their fires. He was walking quickly. He had a purpose. It was with a renewed agony that Dacres watched his enemy—coming to visit his wife. The intensity of that thirst for vengeance, which had now to be checked until a better opportunity, made his whole frame tremble. A wild desire came to him then and there to bound down upon his enemy, and kill and be killed in the presence of his wife. But the other brigands deterred him. These men might interpose and save the Italian, and make him a prisoner. No; he must wait till he could meet his enemy on something like equal terms—when he could strike a blow that would not be in vain. Thus he overmastered himself.

He saw Girasole enter the house. He watched breathlessly. The time seemed long indeed. He could not hear any thing; the conversation, if there was any, was carried on in a low tone. He could not see any thing; those who conversed kept quiet; no one passed in front of the window. It was all a mystery, and this made the time seem longer. At length Dacres began to think that Girasole would not go at all. A long time passed. Hours went away, and still Girasole did not quit the house.

It was now sundown. Dacres had eaten nothing since morning, but the conflict of passion drove away all hunger or thirst. The approach of darkness was in accordance with his own gloomy wishes. Twilight in Italy is short. Night would soon be over all.

The house was on the slope of the bank. At the corner nearest him the house was sunk into the ground in such a way that it looked as though one might climb into the upper story window. As Dacres looked he made up his mind to attempt it. By standing here on tiptoe he could catch the upper window-ledge with his hands. He was strong. He was tall. His enemy was in the house. The hour was at hand. He was the man.

Another hour passed.

All was still.

There was a flickering lamp in the hall, but the men seemed to be asleep.

Another hour passed.

There was no noise.

Then Dacres ventured down. He moved slowly and cautiously, crouching low, and thus traversing the intervening space.

He neared the house and touched it. Before him was the window of the lower story. Above him was the window of the upper story. He lifted up his hands. They could reach the window-ledge.

He put his long, keen knife between his teeth, and caught at the upper window-ledge. Exerting all his strength, he raised himself up so high that he could fling one elbow over. For a moment he hung thus, and waited to take breath and listen.

There was a rush below. Half a dozen shadowy forms surrounded him. He had been seen. He had been trapped.

He dropped down and, seizing his knife, struck right and left.

In vain. He was hurled to the ground and bound tight.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FACE TO FACE.

HAWBURY, on his capture, had been at once taken into the woods, and led and pushed on by no gentle hands. He had thus gone on until he had found himself by that same lake which others of the party had come upon in the various ways which have been described. Toward this lake he was taken, until finally his party reached the old house, which they entered. It has already been said that it was a two-story house. It was also of stone, and strongly built. The door was in the middle of it, and rooms were on each side of the hall. The interior plan of the house was peculiar, for the hall did not run through, but consisted of a square room, and the stone steps wound spirally from the lower hall to the upper one. There were three rooms up stairs, one taking up one end of the house, which was occupied by Mrs. Willoughby and Minnie; another in the rear of the house, into which a door opened from the upper hall, close by the head of the stairs; and a third, which was opposite the room first mentioned.

Hawbury was taken to this house, and led up stairs into this room in the rear of the house. At the end farthest from the door he saw a heap of straw with a few dirty rugs upon it. In the wall a beam was set, to which an iron ring was fastened. He was taken toward this bed, and here his legs were bound together, and the rope that secured them was run around the iron ring so as to allow of no more motion than a few feet. Having thus secured the prisoner, the men left him to his own meditations.

The room was perfectly bare of furniture, nothing being in it but the straw and the dirty rugs. Hawbury could not approach to the windows, for he was bound in a way which prevented that. In fact, he could not move in any direction, for his arms and legs were fastened in such a way that he could scarcely raise himself from where he was sitting. He therefore was compelled to remain in one position, and threw himself down upon the straw on his side, with his face to the wall, for he found that position easier than any other. In this way he lay for some time, until at length he was roused by the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs. Several people were passing his room. He heard the voice of Girasole. He listened with deep attention. For some time there was no reply. At length there was the sound of a woman's voice—clear, plain, and unmistakable. It was a fretful voice of complaint. Girasole was trying to answer it. After a time Girasole left. Then all was still. Then Girasole returned. Then there was a clattering noise on the stairs, and the bumping of some heavy weight, and the heavy breathing of men. Then he heard Girasole say something, after which arose Minnie's voice, close by, as though she was in the hall, and her words were, "Oh, take it away, take it away!" followed by long reproaches, which Hawbury did not fully understand.

This showed him that Minnie, at least, was a prisoner, and in this house, and in the adjoining room, along with some one whom he rightly supposed was Mrs. Willoughby.

After this there was a further silence for some time, which at last was broken by fresh sounds of trampling and shuffling, together with the confused directions of several voices all speaking at once. Hawbury listened, and turned on his couch of straw so as to see any thing which presented itself. The clatter and the noise approached nearer, ascending the stairs, until at last he saw that they were entering his room. Two of the brigands came first, carrying something carefully. In a few moments the burden which they bore was revealed.

It was a rude litter, hastily made from bushes fastened together. Upon this lay the dead body of a man, his white face upturned, and his limbs stiffened in the rigidity of death. Hawbury did not remember very distinctly any of the particular events of his confused struggle with the brigands; but he was not at all surprised to see that there had been one of the ruffians sent to his account. The brigands who carried in their dead companion looked at the captive with a sullen ferocity and a scowling vengefulness, which showed plainly that they would demand of him a reckoning for their comrade's blood if it were only in their power. But they did not delay, nor did they make any actual demonstrations to Hawbury. They placed the corpse of their comrade upon the floor in the middle of the room, and then went out.

The presence of the corpse only added to the gloom of Hawbury's situation, and he once more turned his face to the wall, so as to shut out the sight. Once more he gave himself up to his own thoughts, and so the time passed slowly on. He heard no sounds now from the room where Miss Fay was confined. He heard no noise from the men below, and could not tell whether they were still guarding the door, or had gone away. Various projects came to him, foremost among which was the idea of escaping. Bribery seemed the only possible way. There was about this, however, the same difficulty which Mrs. Willoughby had found—his ignorance of the language. He thought that this would be an effectual bar to any communication, and saw no other alternative than to wait Girasole's pleasure. It seemed to him that a ransom would be asked, and he felt sure, from Girasole's offensive manner, that the ransom would be large. But there was no help for it. He felt more troubled about Miss Fay, for Girasole's remarks about her seemed to

point to views of his own which were incompatible with her liberation.

In the midst of these reflections another noise arose below. It was a steady tramp of two or three men walking. The noise ascended the stairway, and drew nearer and nearer. Hawbury turned once more, and saw two men entering the room, carrying between them a box about six feet long and eighteen inches or two feet wide. It was coarsely but strongly made, and was undoubtedly intended as a coffin for the corpse of the brigand. The men put the coffin down against the wall and retired. After a few minutes they returned again with the coffin lid. They then lifted the dead body into the coffin, and one of them put the lid in its place and secured it with half a dozen screws. After this Hawbury was once more left alone. He found this far more tolerable, for now he had no longer before his very eyes the abhorrent sight of the dead body. Hidden in its coffin, it no longer gave offense to his sensibilities. Once more, therefore, Hawbury turned his thoughts toward projects of escape, and discussed in his mind the probabilities for and against.

The day had been long, and longer still did it seem to the captive as hour after hour passed slowly by. He could not look at his watch, which his captors had spared; but from the shadows as they fell through the windows, and from the general appearance of the sky, he knew that the close of the day was not far off. He began to wonder that he was left so long alone and in suspense, and to feel impatient to know the worst as to his fate. Why did not some of them come to tell him? Where was Girasole? Was he the chief? Were the brigands debating about his fate, or were they thus leaving him in suspense so as to make him despondent and submissive to their terms? From all that he had ever heard of brigands and their ways, the latter seemed not unlikely; and this thought made him see the necessity of guarding himself against being too impatient for freedom, and too compliant with any demands of theirs.

From these thoughts he was at last roused by footsteps which ascended the stairs. He turned and looked toward the door. A man entered.

It was Girasole.

He entered slowly, with folded arms, and coming about half-way, he stood and surveyed the prisoner in silence. Hawbury, with a sudden effort, brought himself up to a sitting posture, and calmly surveyed the Italian.

"Well," asked Hawbury, "I should like to know how long you intend to keep up this sort of thing? What are you going to do about it? Name your price, man, and we'll discuss it, and settle upon something reasonable."

"My price?" repeated Girasole, with peculiar emphasis.

"Yes. Of course I understand you fellows. It's your trade, you know. You've caught me, and, of course, you'll try to make the best of me, and all that sort of thing. So don't keep me waiting."

"Inglis milor," said Girasole, with a sharp, quick accent, his face flushing up as he spoke —"Inglis milor, dere is no price as you mean, an' no ransom. De price is one dat you will not wis to pay."

"Oh, come, now, my good fellow, really you must remember that I'm tied up, and not in a position to be chaffed. Bother your Italian humbug! Don't speak in these confounded figures of speech, you know, but say up and down—how much?"

"De brigands haf talk you ovair, an' dey will haf no price."

"What the devil is all that rot about?"

"Dey will haf youair blood."

"My blood?"

"Yes."

"And pray, my good fellow, what good is that going to do them?"

"It is vengeance," said Girasole.

"Vengeance? Pooh! Nonsense! What rot! What have I ever done?"

"Dat—dere—his blood," said Girasole, pointing to the coffin.

"What! that scoundrel? Why, man alive, are you crazy? That was a fair stand-up fight. That is, it was two English against twenty Italians, if you call that fair; but perhaps it is. His blood! By Jove! Cool, that! Come, I like it."

"An' more," said Girasole, who now grew more excited. "It is not de brigand who condemn you; it is also me. I condemn you."

"You?" said Hawbury, elevating his eyebrows in some surprise, and fixing a cool stare upon Girasole. "And what the devil's *this* row about, I should like to know? I don't know *you*. What have you against *me*?"

"Inglis milor," cried Girasole, who was stung to the quick by a certain indescribable yet most irritating superciliousness in Hawbury's tone—"Inglis milor, you sall see what you sall soffair. You sall die! Dere is no hope. You are condemn by de brigand. You also are condemn by me, for you insult me."

"Well, of all the beastly rot I ever heard, this is about the worst! What do you mean by all this infernal nonsense? Insult you! What would I insult you for? Why, man alive, you're as mad as a March hare! If I thought you were a gentleman, I'd—by Jove, I will, too! See here, you fellow: I'll fight you for it—pistols, or any thing. Come, now. I'll drop all considerations of rank. I'll treat you as if you were a real count, and not a sham one. Come, now. What do you say? Shall we have it out? Pistols—in the woods there. You've got all your infernal crew around you, you know. Well? What? You won't? By Jove!"

Girasole's gesture showed that he declined the proposition.

"Inglis milor," said he, with a venomous

"INGLIS MILOR, I SALL HAF YOUAIR LIFE."

glitter in his eyes, "I sall haf youair life—wis de pistol but not in de duello. I sall blow your brain out myself."

"Blow and be hanged, then!" said Hawbury.

And with these words he fell back on his straw, and took no further notice of the Italian.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TORN ASUNDER.

When Dacres made his attempt upon the house he was not so unobserved as he supposed himself to be. Minnie and Mrs. Willoughby happened at that time to be sitting on the floor by the window, one on each side, and they were looking out. They had chosen the seat as affording some prospect of the outer world. There was in Mrs. Willoughby a certain instinctive feeling that if any rescue came, it would come from the land side; and, therefore, though the hope was faint indeed, it nevertheless was sufficiently well defined to inspire her with an uneasy and incessant vigilance. Thus, then, she had seated herself by the window, and Minnie had taken her place on the opposite side, and the two sisters, with clasped hands, sat listening to the voices of the night.

At length they became aware of a movement upon the bank just above them and lying opposite. The sisters clasped one another's hands more closely, and peered earnestly through the gloom. It was pretty dark, and the forest threw down a heavy shadow, but still their eyes were by this time accustomed to the dark, and they could distinguish most of the objects there. Among these they soon distinguished a moving figure; but what it was, whether man or beast, they could not make out.

This moving figure was crawling down the bank. There was no cover to afford concealment, and it was evident that he was trusting altogether to the concealment of the darkness. It was a hazardous experiment, and Mrs. Willoughby trembled in suspense.

Minnie, however, did not tremble at all, nor

was the suspense at all painful. When Mrs. Willoughby first cautiously directed her attention to it in a whisper, Minnie thought it was some animal.

"Why, Kitty dear," she said, speaking back in a whisper, "why, it's an animal; I wonder if the creature is a wild beast. I'm sure I think it's very dangerous, and no doors or windows. But it's *always* the way. He wouldn't give me a chair; and so I dare say I shall be eaten up by a bear before morning."

Minnie gave utterance to this expectation without the slightest excitement, just as though the prospect of becoming food for a bear was one of the very commonest incidents of her life.

"Oh, I don't think it's a bear."

"Well, then, it's a tiger or a lion, or perhaps a wolf. I'm sure *I* don't see what difference it makes what one is eaten by, when one *has* to be eaten."

"It's a man!" said Mrs. Willoughby, tremulously.

"A man!—nonsense, Kitty darling. A man walks; he doesn't go on all-fours, except when he is very, very small."

"Hush! it's some one coming to help us. Watch him, Minnie dear. Oh, how dangerous!"

"Do you really think so?" said Minnie, with evident pleasure. "Now that is really kind. But I wonder who it *can* be?"

Mrs. Willoughby squeezed her hand, and made no reply. She was watching the slow and cautious movement of the shadowy figure.

"He's coming nearer!" said she, tremulously.

Minnie felt her sister's hand throb at the quick movement of her heart, and heard her short, quick breathing.

"Who *can* it be, I wonder?" said Minnie, full of curiosity, but without any excitement at all.

"Oh, Minnie!"

"What's the matter, darling?"

"It's so terrible."

"What?"

"This suspense. Oh, I'm so afraid!"

"Afraid! Why, I'm not afraid at all."

"Oh! he'll be caught."

"No, he won't," said Minnie, confidently. "I *knew* he'd come. They *always* do. Don't be afraid that he'll be caught, or that he'll fail. They *never* fail. They always *will* save me. Wait till your life has been saved as often as mine has, Kitty darling. Oh, I expected it all! I was thinking a little while ago he ought to be here soon."

"He! Who?"

"Why, any person; the person who is going to save me this time. I don't know, of course, who he is; some horrid man, of course. And then—oh dear!—I'll have it all over again. He'll carry me away on his back, and through those wretched woods, and bump me against the trees and things. Then he'll get me to the road, and put me on a horrid old horse, and gallop away. And by that time it will be morning. And then he'll propose. And so there'll be another. And I don't know what I *shall* do about it. Oh dear!"

Mrs. Willoughby had not heard half of this. All her soul was intent upon the figure outside. She only pressed her sister's hand, and gave a warning "Hus-s-s-h!"

"I know one thing I *do* wish," said Minnie.

Her sister made no reply.

"I do wish it would turn out to be that nice, dear, good, kind Rufus K. Gunn. I don't want any more of them. And I'm sure he's nicer than this horrid Count, who wouldn't take the trouble to get me even a chair. And yet he pretends to be fond of me."

"Hus-s-s-h!" said her sister.

But Minnie was irrepressible.

"I don't want any horrid stranger. But, oh, Kitty darling, it would be so *awfully* funny if he were to be caught! and then he *couldn't* propose, you know."

By this time the figure had reached the house. Minnie peeped over and looked down. Then she drew back her head and sighed.

"Oh dear!" she said, in a plaintive tone.

"What, darling?"

"Why, Kitty darling, do you know he really looks a little like that great, big, horrid man that ran with me down the volcano, and then pretended he was my dear papa. And here he comes to save me again. Oh, what *shall* I do? Won't you pretend you're me, Kitty darling, and please go yourself? Oh, ple-e-ease do!"

But now Minnie was interrupted by two strong hands grasping the window-sill. A moment after a shadowy head arose above it. Mrs. Willoughby started back, but through the gloom she was able to recognize the strongly marked face of Scone Dacres.

For a moment he stared through the darkness. Then he flung his elbow over.

There arose a noise below. There was a rush. The figure disappeared from the window. A furious struggle followed, in the midst of which arose fierce oaths and deep breathings, and the sound of blows. Then the struggle subsided, and they heard footsteps tramping heavily. They followed the sound into the house. They heard men coming up the stairs and into the hall outside. Then they all moved into the front-room opposite theirs. After a few minutes they heard the steps descending the stairs. By this they judged that the prisoner had been taken to that room which was on the other side of the hall and in the front of the house.

"There dies our last hope!" said Mrs. Willoughby, and burst into tears.

"I'm sure I don't see what you're crying about," said Minnie. "You certainly oughtn't to want me to be carried off again by that person. If he had me, he'd *never* give me up—especially after saving me twice."

Mrs. Willoughby made no reply, and the sisters sat in silence for nearly an hour. They

were then aroused by the approach of footsteps which entered the house; after which voices were heard below.

Then some one ascended the stairs, and they saw the flicker of a light.

It was Girasole.

He came into the room with a small lamp, holding his hand in front of the flame. This lamp he set down in a corner out of the draught, and then turned to the ladies.

"Miladi," said Girasole, in a gentle voice, "I am ver pained to haf to tella you dat it is necessaire for you to separat dis night—till to-morra."

"To separate?" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby.

"Only till to-morra, miladi. Den you sall be togeder foravva. But it is now necessaire. Dere haf ben an attemp to a rescue. I mus guard again dis—an' it mus be done by a separazion. If you are togeder you might run. Dis man was almos up here. It was only chance dat I saw him in time."

"Oh, Sir," cried Mrs. Willoughby, "you can not—you will not separate us. You can not have the heart to. I promise most solemnly that we will not escape if you only leave us together."

Girasole shook his head.

"I can not," said he, firmly; "de mees is too precious. I dare not. If you are prisonaire se will not try to fly, an' so I secure her de more; but if you are togeder you will find some help. You will bribe de men. I can not trust dem."

"Oh, do not separate us. Tie us. Bind us. Fasten us with chains. Fasten me with chains, but leave me with her."

"Chains? nonsance; dat is impossibile. Chains? no, miladi. You sall be treat beautiful. No chain, no; notin but affection—till to-morra, an' den de mees sall be my wife. De priest haf come, an' it sall be allaright to-morra, an' you sall be wit her again. An' now you hat to come away; for if you do not be pleasant, I sall not be able to 'low you to stay to-morra wit de mees when se become my Contessa."

Mrs. Willoughby flung her arms about her sister, and clasped her in a convulsive embrace.

"Well, Kitty darling," said Minnie, "don't cry, or you'll make me cry too. It's just what we might have expected, you know. He's been as unkind as he could be about the chair, and of course he'll do all he can to tease me. Don't cry, dear. You must go, I suppose, since that horrid man talks and scolds so about it; only be sure to be back early; but how I am *ever* to pass the night here all alone and standing up, I'm sure *I* don't know."

"Alone? Oh no," said Girasole. "Charming mees, you sall not be alone; I haf guard for dat. I haf sent for a maid."

"But I don't want any of your horrid old maids. I want my own maid, or none at all."

"Se sall be your own maid. I haf sent for her."

"What, my own maid?—Dowlas?"

"I am ver sorry, but it is not dat one. It is anoder—an Italian."

"Well, I think that is *very* unkind, when you *know* I can't speak a word of the language. But you *always* do all you can to tease me. I *wish* I had never seen you."

Girasole looked hurt.

"Charming mees," said he, "I will lay down my life for you."

"But I don't want you to lay down your life. I want Dowlas."

"And you sall haf Dowlas to-morra. An' to-night you sall haf de Italian maid."

"Well, I suppose I must," said Minnie, resignedly.

"Miladi," said Girasole, turning to Mrs. Willoughby, "I am ver sorry for dis leetle accommodazion. De room where you mus go is de one where I haf put de man dat try to safe you. He is tied fast. You mus promis you will not loose him. Haf you a knife?"

"No," said Mrs. Willoughby, in a scarce audible tone.

"Do not mourn. You sall be able to talk to de prisonaire and get consolazion. But come."

With these words Girasole led the way out into the hall, and into the front-room on the opposite side. He carried the lamp in his hand. Mrs. Willoughby saw a figure lying at the other end of the room on the floor. His face was turned toward them, but in the darkness she could not see it plainly. Some straw was heaped up in the corner next her.

"Dere," said Girasole, "is your bed. I am sorra. Do not be trouble."

With this he went away.

Mrs. Willoughby flung herself on her knees, and bowed her head and wept convulsively. She heard the heavy step of Girasole as he went down stairs. Her first impulse was to rush back to her sister. But she dreaded discovery, and felt that disobedience would only make her fate harder.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FOUND AT LAST.

In a few moments Girasole came back and entered Minnie's room. He was followed by a woman who was dressed in the garb of an Italian peasant girl. Over her head she wore a hood to protect her from the night air, the limp folds of which hung over her face. Minnie looked carelessly at this woman and then at Girasole.

"Charming mees," said Girasole, "I haf brought you a maid for dis night. When we leaf dis you sall haf what maid you wis."

"That horrid old fright!" said Minnie. "I don't want her."

"You sall only haf her for dis night," said Girasole. "You will be taken care for."

"I suppose nobody cares for what *I* want,"

"ONE ARM WENT AROUND HER NECK."

said Minnie, "and I may as well speak to the wall, for all the good it does."

Girasole smiled and bowed, and put his hand on his heart, and then called down the stairs:

"Padre Patricio!"

A solid, firm step now sounded on the stairs, and in a few moments the priest came up. Girasole led the way into Hawbury's room. The prisoner lay on his side. He was in a deep sleep. Girasole looked in wonder at the sleeper who was spending in this way the last hours of his life, and then pointed to the coffin.

"Here," said he, in Italian, "is the body. When the grave is dug they will tell you. You must stay here. You will not be afraid to be with the dead."

The priest smiled.

Girasole now retreated and went down stairs.

Soon all was still.

The Italian woman had been standing where she had stopped ever since she first came into the room. Minnie had not paid any attention to her, but at last she noticed this.

"I *wish* you wouldn't stand there in that way. You really make me feel quite nervous. And what with the dark, and not having any light, and losing poor dear Kitty, and not having any chair to sit upon, really one's life is scarce worth having. But all this is thrown away, as you can't speak English—and how horrid it is to have no one to talk to."

The woman made no reply, but with a quiet, stealthy step she drew near to Minnie.

"What do you want? You horrid creature, keep away," said Minnie, drawing back in some alarm.

"Minnie dear!" said the woman. "H-s-s-s-h!" she added, in a low whisper.

Minnie started.

"Who are you?" she whispered.

One arm went around her neck, and another hand went over her mouth, and the woman drew nearer to her.

"Not a word. H-s-s-s-h! I've risked my life. The priest brought me."

"Why, my darling, darling love of an Ethel!" said Minnie, who was overwhelmed with surprise.

"H-s-s-s-h!"

"But how can I h-s-s-s-h when I'm so perfectly frantic with delight? Oh, you darling pet!"

"H-s-s-s-h! Not another word. I'll be discovered and lost."

"Well, dear, I'll speak very, very low. But how did you come here?"

"The priest brought me."

"The priest?"

"Yes. He was sent for, you know; and I thought I could help you, and he is going to save you."

"He! Who?"

"The priest, you know."

"The priest! Is he a Roman Catholic priest, Ethel darling?"

"Yes, dear."

"And *he* is going to save me this time, is he?"

"I hope so, dear."

"Oh, how perfectly lovely that is! and it was *so* kind and thoughtful in you! Now this is really quite nice, for you know I've *longed* so to be saved by a priest. These horrid men, you know, all go and propose the moment they save one's life; but a priest *can't*, you know—no, not if he saved one a thousand times over. Can he now, Ethel darling?"

"Oh no!" said Ethel, in a little surprise. "But stop, darling. You really must, *not* say another word—no, not so much as a whisper—for we certainly *will* be heard; and don't notice what I do, or the priest either, for it's very, very important, dear. But you keep as still as a little mouse, and wait till we are all ready."

"Well, Ethel dear, I will; but it's *awfully* funny to see you here—and oh, *such* a funny figure as you are!"

"H-s-s-s-h!"

Minnie relapsed into silence now, and Ethel withdrew near to the door, where she stood and listened. All was still. Down stairs there was no light and no sound. In the hall above she could see nothing, and could not tell whether any guards were there or not.

Hawbury's room was at the back of the house, as has been said, and the door was just at the top of the stairs. The door where Ethel was standing was there too, and was close by the other, so that she could listen and hear the deep breathing of the sleeper. One or two indistinct sounds escaped him from time to

time, and this was all that broke the deep stillness.

She waited thus for nearly an hour, during which all was still, and Minnie said not a word. Then a shadowy figure appeared near her at Hawbury's door, and a hand touched her shoulder.

Not a word was said.

Ethel stole softly and noiselessly into Hawbury's room, where the priest was. She could see the two windows, and the priest indicated to her the position of the sleeper.

Slowly and cautiously she stole over toward him.

She reached the place.

She knelt by his side, and bent low over him. Her lips touched his forehead.

The sleeper moved slightly, and murmured some words.

"All fire," he murmured; "fire—and flame. It is a furnace before us. She must not die."

Then he sighed.

Ethel's heart beat wildly. The words that he spoke told her where his thoughts were wandering. She bent lower; tears fell from her eyes and upon his face.

"My darling," murmured the sleeper, "we will land here. I will cook the fish. How pale! Don't cry, dearest."

The house was all still. Not a sound arose. Ethel still bent down and listened for more of these words which were so sweet to her.

"Ethel!" murmured the sleeper, "where are you? Lost! lost!"

A heavy sigh escaped him, which found an echo in the heart of the listener. She touched his forehead gently with one hand, and whispered,

"My lord!"

Hawbury started.

"What's this?" he murmured.

"A friend," said Ethel.

At this Hawbury became wide awake.

"Who are you?" he whispered, in a trembling voice. "For God's sake—oh, for God's sake, speak again! tell me!"

"Harry," said Ethel.

Hawbury recognized the voice at once.

A slight cry escaped him, which was instantly suppressed, and then a torrent of whispered words followed.

"Oh, my darling! my darling! my darling! What is this? How is this? Is it a dream? Oh, am I awake? Is it you? Oh, my darling! my darling! Oh, if my arms were but free!"

Ethel bent over him, and passed her arm around him till she felt the cords that bound him. She had a sharp knife ready, and with this she cut the cords. Hawbury raised himself, without waiting for his feet to be freed, and caught Ethel in his freed arms in a silent embrace, and pressed her over and over again to his heart.

Ethel with difficulty extricated herself.

"There's no time to lose," said she. "I came to save you. Don't waste another moment; it will be too late. Oh, do not! Oh, wait!" she added, as Hawbury made another effort to clasp her in his arms. "Oh, do what I say, for my sake!"

She felt for his feet, and cut the rest of his bonds.

"What am I to do?" asked Hawbury, clasping her close, as though he was afraid that he would lose her again.

"Escape."

"Well, come! I'll leap with you from the window."

"You can't. The house and all around swarms with brigands. They watch us all closely."

"I'll fight my way through them."

"Then you'll be killed, and I'll die."

"Well, I'll do whatever you say."

"Listen, then. You must escape alone."

"What! and leave you? Never!"

"I'm safe. I'm disguised, and a priest is with me as my protector."

"How can you be safe in such a place as this?"

"I am safe. Do not argue. There is no time to lose. The priest brought me here, and will take me away."

"But there are others here. I can't leave them. Isn't Miss Fay a prisoner? and another lady?"

"Yes; but the priest and I will be able, I hope, to liberate them. We have a plan."

"But can't I go with you and help you?"

"Oh no! it's impossible. You could not. We are going to take them away in disguise. We have a dress. You couldn't be disguised."

"And *must* I go alone?"

"You must."

"I'll do it, then. Tell me what it is. But oh, my darling! how can I leave you, and in such a place as this?"

"I assure you I am not in the slightest danger."

"I shall feel terribly anxious."

"H-s-s-s-h! no more of this. Listen now."

"Well?"

Ethel bent lower, and whispered in his ear, in even lower tones than ever, the plan which she had contrived.

CHAPTER XXX.

A DESPERATE PLAN.

ETHEL'S plan was hastily revealed. The position was exceedingly perilous; time was short, and this was the only way of escape.

It was the priest who had concocted it, and he had thought of it as the only plan by which Hawbury's rescue could be effected. This ingenious Irishman had also formed another plan for the rescue of Minnie and her sister, which was to be attempted in due course of time.

Now no ordinary mode of escape was possible for Hawbury. A strict watch was kept.

The priest had noticed on his approach that guards were posted in different directions in such a way that no fugitive from the house could elude them. He had also seen that the guard inside the house was equally vigilant. To leap from the window and run for it would be certain death, for that was the very thing which the brigands anticipated. To make a sudden rush down the stairs was not possible, for at the door below there were guards; and there, most vigilant of all, was Girasole himself.

The decision of the Irish priest was correct, as has been proved in the case of Dacres, who, in spite of all his caution, was observed and captured. Of this the priest knew nothing, but judged from what he himself had seen on his approach to the house.

The plan of the priest had been hastily communicated to Ethel, who shared his convictions and adopted his conclusions. She also had noticed the vigilance with which the guard had been kept up, and only the fact that a woman had been sent for and was expected with the priest had preserved her from discovery and its consequences. As it was, however, no notice was taken of her, and her pretended character was assumed to be her real one. Even Girasole had scarcely glanced at her. A village peasant was of no interest in his eyes. His only thought was of Minnie, and the woman that the priest brought was only used as a desperate effort to show a desire for her comfort. After he had decided to separate the sisters the woman was of more importance; but he had nothing to say to her, and thus Ethel had effected her entrance to Minnie's presence in safety, with the result that has been described.

The priest had been turning over many projects in his brain, but at last one suggested itself which had originated in connection with the very nature of his errand.

One part of that errand was that a man should be conveyed out of the house and carried away and left in a certain place. Now the man who was thus to be carried out was a dead man, and the certain place to which he was to be borne and where he was to be left was the grave; but these stern facts did not at all deter the Irish priest from trying to make use of this task that lay before him for the benefit of Hawbury.

Here was a problem. A prisoner anxious for escape, and a dead man awaiting burial; how were these two things to be exchanged so that the living man might pass out without going to the grave?

The Irish priest puzzled and pondered and grew black in the face with his efforts to get to the solution of this problem, and at length succeeded—to his own satisfaction, at any rate. What is more, when he explained his plan to Ethel, she adopted it. She started, it is true; she shuddered, she recoiled from it at first, but finally she adopted it. Furthermore, she took it upon herself to persuade Hawbury to fall in with it.

So much with regard to Hawbury. For Minnie and her sister the indefatigable priest had already concocted a plan before leaving home. This was the very commonplace plan of a disguise. It was to be an old woman's apparel, and he trusted to the chapter of accidents to make the plan a success. He noticed with pleasure that some women were at the place, and thought that the prisoners might be confounded with them.

When at length Ethel had explained the plan to Hawbury he made a few further objections, but finally declared himself ready to carry it out.

The priest now began to put his project into execution. He had brought a screw-driver with him, and with this he took out the screws from the coffin one by one, as quietly as possible.

Then the lid was lifted off, and Hawbury arose and helped the priest to transfer the corpse from the coffin to the straw. They then put the corpse on its side, with the face to the wall, and bound the hands behind it, and the feet also. The priest then took Hawbury's handkerchief and bound it around the head of the corpse. One or two rugs that lay near were thrown over the figure, so that it at length looked like a sleeping man.

Hawbury now got into the coffin and lay down on his back at full length. The priest had brought some bits of wood with him, and these he put on the edge of the coffin in such a way that the lid would be kept off at a distance of about a quarter of an inch. Through this opening Hawbury could have all the air that was requisite for breathing.

Then Ethel assisted the priest to lift the lid on.

Thus far all had been quiet; but now a slight noise was heard below. Some men were moving. Ethel was distracted with anxiety, but the priest was as cool as a clock. He whispered to her to go back to the room where she belonged.

"Will you be able to finish it?" she asked.

"Sure an' I will—only don't you be afther stayin' here any longer."

At this Ethel stole back to Minnie's room, and stood listening with a quick-beating heart.

But the priest worked coolly and dextrously. He felt for the holes to which the screws belonged, and succeeded in putting in two of them.

Then there was a noise in the hall below.

The priest began to put in the third screw.

There were footsteps on the stairs.

He screwed on.

Nearer and nearer came the steps.

The priest still kept to his task.

At last a man entered the room. Ethel, who had heard all, was faint with anxiety. She was afraid that the priest had not finished his task.

Her fears were groundless.

Just as the foremost of the men entered the room the priest finished screwing, and stood by

the coffin, having slipped the screw-driver into his pocket, as calm as though nothing had happened. Three of the screws were in, and that was as many as were needed.

The men brought no light with them, and this circumstance was in the priest's favor.

"You've been keeping me waiting long," said the priest, in Italian.

"You may be glad it wasn't longer," said one of them, in a sullen tone. "Where is it?"

"Here," said the priest.

The men gathered around the coffin, and stooped down over it, one at each corner. Then they raised it up. Then they carried it out; and soon the heavy steps of the men were heard as they went down the stairs with their burden.

Ethel still stood watching and listening.

As she listened she heard some one ascending the stairs. New terror arose. Something was wrong, and all would be discovered. But the man who came up had no light, and that was one comfort. She could not see who it was.

The man stopped for a moment in front of Minnie's door, and stood so close to her that she heard his breathing. It was quick and heavy, like the breathing of a very tired or a very excited man. Then he turned away and went to the door of the front-room opposite. Here he also stood for a few moments.

All was still.

Then he came back, and entered Hawbury's room.

Now the crisis had come—the moment when all might be discovered. And if so, they all were lost. Ethel bent far forward and tried to peer through the gloom. She saw the dark figure of the new-comer pass by one of the windows, and by the outline she knew that it was Girasole. He passed on into the shadow, and toward the place where the straw was. She could not see him any more.

Girasole stepped noiselessly and cautiously, as though fearful of waking the sleeper. At every step he paused and listened. The silence reassured him.

He drew nearer and nearer, his left hand groping forward, and his right hand holding a pistol. His movements were perfectly noiseless.

His own excitement was now intense, his heart throbbed fiercely and almost painfully as he approached his victim.

At last he reached the spot, and knelt on one knee. He listened for a moment. There was no noise and no movement on the part of the figure before him.

In the gloom he could see the outline of that figure plainly. It lay on its side, curled up in the most comfortable attitude which could be assumed, where arms and legs were bound.

"How soundly he sleeps!" thought Girasole.

He paused for a moment, and seemed to hesitate; but it was only for a moment. Then, summing up his resolution, he held his pistol close to the head of the figure, and fired.

"HE HELD HIS PISTOL CLOSE TO THE HEAD, AND FIRED."

The loud report echoed through the house. A shriek came from Minnie's room, and a cry came from Mrs. Willoughby, who sprang toward the hall. But Girasole came out and intercepted her.

"Eet ees notin," said he, in a tremulous voice. "Eet ees all ovair. Eet ees only a false alarm."

Mrs. Willoughby retreated to her room, and Minnie said nothing. As for Ethel, the suspense with her had passed away as the report of the pistol came to her ears.

Meanwhile the coffin was carried out of the house, and the men, together with the priest, walked on toward a place further up the shore and on the outskirts of the woods. They reached a place where a grave was dug.

At this moment a pistol-shot sounded. The priest stopped, and the men stopped also. They did not understand it. The priest did not know the cause of the shot, but seeing the alarm of the men he endeavored to excite their fears. One of the men went back, and was cursed by Girasole for his pains. So he returned to the grave, cursing every body.

The coffin was now lowered into the grave, and the priest urged the men to go away and let him finish the work; but they refused. The fellows seemed to have some affection for their dead comrade, and wished to show it by putting him underground, and doing the last honors. So the efforts of the Irish priest, though very well meant, and very urgent, and very persevering, did not meet with that success which he anticipated.

Suddenly he stopped in the midst of the burial service, which he was prolonging to the utmost.

"Hark!" he cried, in Italian.

"What?" they asked.

"It's a gun! It's an alarm!"

"There's no gun, and no alarm," said they.

All listened, but there was no repetition of the sound, and the priest went on.

He had to finish it.

He stood trembling and at his wit's end. Already the men began to throw in the earth.

But now there came a real alarm.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DISCOVERED.

THE report of the pistol had startled Minnie, and for a moment had greatly agitated her. The cry of Mrs. Willoughby elicited a response from her to the effect that all was right, and would, no doubt, have resulted in a conversation, had it not been prevented by Girasole.

Minnie then relapsed into silence for a time, and Ethel took a seat by her side on the floor, for Minnie would not go near the straw, and then the two interlocked their arms in an affectionate embrace.

"Ethel darling," whispered Minnie, "do you know I'm beginning to get awfully tired of this?"

"I should think so, poor darling!"

"If I only had some place to sit on," said Minnie, still reverting to her original grievance, "it wouldn't be so very bad, you know. I could put up with not having a bed, or a sofa, or that sort of thing, you know; but really I must say not to have any kind of a seat seems to me to be very, very inconsiderate, to say the least of it."

"Poor darling!" said Ethel again.

"And now do you know, Ethel dear, I'm beginning to feel as though I should really like to run away from this place, if I thought that horrid man wouldn't see me?"

"Minnie darling," said Ethel, "that's the very thing I came for, you know."

"Oh yes, I know! And that dear, nice, good, kind, delightful priest! Oh, it was so nice of you to think of a priest, Ethel dear! I'm *so* grateful! But when is he coming?"

"Soon, I hope. But *do* try not to talk so."

"But I'm only whispering."

"Yes, but your whispers are too loud, and I'm afraid they'll hear."

"Well, I'll try to keep still; but it's so *awfully* hard, you know, when one has *so* much to say, Ethel dear."

Minnie now remained silent for about five minutes.

"How did you say you were going to take me away?" she asked at length.

"In disguise," said Ethel.

"But *what* disguise?"

"In an old woman's dress—but hu-s-s-s-sh!"

"But I don't *want* to be dressed up in an old woman's clothes; they make me *such* a figure. Why, I'd be a perfect fright."

"Hu-s-s-s-sh! Dear, dear Minnie, you're talking too loud. They'll certainly hear us," said Ethel, in a low, frightened whisper.

"But *do*—*do* promise you won't take me in an old woman's clothes!"

"Oh, there—there it is again!" said Ethel. "Dear, dear Minnie, there's some one listening."

"Well, I don't see what harm there is in what I'm saying. I only wanted—"

Here there was a movement on the stairs just outside. Ethel had heard a sound of that kind two or three times, and it had given her alarm; but now Minnie herself heard it, and stopped speaking.

And now a voice sounded from the stairs. Some Italian words were spoken, and seemed to be addressed to them. Of course they could make no reply. The words were repeated, with others, and the speaker seemed to be impatient. Suddenly it flashed across Ethel's mind that the speaker was Girasole, and that the words were addressed to her.

Her impression was correct, and the speaker was Girasole. He had heard the sibilant sounds of the whispering, and, knowing that Minnie could not speak Italian, it had struck him as being a very singular thing that she should be whispering. Had her sister joined her? He thought he would go up and see. So he went up softly, and the whispering still went on. He therefore concluded that the "Italian woman" was not doing her duty, and that Mrs. Willoughby had joined her sister. This he would not allow; but as he had already been sufficiently harsh he did not wish to be more so, and therefore he called to the "Italian woman."

"Hallo, you woman there! didn't I tell you not to let the ladies speak to one another?"

Of course no answer was given, so Girasole grew more angry still, and cried out again, more imperatively:

"Why do you not answer me? Where are you? Is this the way you watch?"

Still there was no answer. Ethel heard, and by this time knew what his suspicion was; but she could neither do nor say any thing.

"Come down here at once, you hag!"

But the "hag" did not come down, nor did she give any answer. The "hag" was trembling violently, and saw that all was lost. If the priest were only here! If she could only have gone and returned with him! What kept him?

Girasole now came to the top of the stairs, and spoke to Minnie.

"Charming mees, are you awake?"

"Yes," said Minnie.

"Ees your sistaire wit you?"

"No. How can *she* be with me, I should like to know, when you've gone and put her in some horrid old room?"

"Ah! not wit you? Who are you whisperin' to, den?"

Minnie hesitated.

"To my maid," said she.

"WHAT DIT YOU COME FOR?"—"FOR HER."

"Does de maid spik Inglis?" asked Girasole.

"Yes," said Minnie.

"Ah! I did not know eet. I mus have a look at de contadina who spiks Inglis. Come here, Italiana. You don't spik Italiano, I tink. Come here."

Ethel rose to her feet.

Girasole ran down, and came back after a few minutes with a lamp. Concealment was useless, and so Ethel did not cover her face with the hood. It had fallen off when she was sitting by Minnie, and hung loosely down her shoulders from the strings which were around her neck. Girasole recognized her at one glance.

"Ah!" said he; and then he stood thinking. As for Ethel, now that the suspense was over and the worst realized, her agitation ceased. She stood looking at him with perfect calm.

"What dit you come for?" he asked.

"For *her*," said Ethel, making a gesture toward Minnie.

"What could you do wit her?"

"I could see her and comfort her."

"Ah! an' you hope to make her escape. Ha, ha! ver well. You mus not complain eef you haf to soffair de consequence. Aha! an' so de priest bring you here—ha?"

Ethel was silent.

"Ah! you fear to say—you fear you harma de priest—ha?"

Minnie had thus far said nothing, but now she rose and looked at Girasole, and then at Ethel. Then she twined one arm around Ethel's waist, and turned her large, soft, childish eyes upon Girasole.

"What do you mean," she said, "by *always* coming here and teasing, and worrying, and firing off pistols, and frightening people? I'm sure it was horrid enough for you to make me come to this wretched place, when you *know* I don't like it, without annoying me so. Why did you go and take away poor darling Kitty? And what do you mean now, pray, by coming here? I never was treated so unkindly in my life. I did not think that *any one* could be so very, very rude."

"Charming mees," said Girasole, with a deprecating air, "it pains me to do any ting dat you do not like."

"It don't pain you," said Minnie—"it don't pain you *at all*. You're *always* teasing me. You *never* do what I want you to. You wouldn't even give me a chair."

"Alas, carissima mia, to-morra you sall haf all! But dis place is so remote."

"It is *not* remote," said Minnie. "It's close by roads and villages and things. Why, here is Ethel; she has been in a village where there are houses, and people, and as many chairs as she wants."

"Oh, mees, eef you will but wait an' be patient—eef you will but wait an' see how tender I will be, an' how I lof you."

"You *don't* love me," said Minnie, "one bit. Is this love—not to give me a chair? I have been standing up till I am nearly ready to drop. And you have nothing better than some wretched promises. I don't care for to-morrow; I want to be comfortable to-day. You won't let me have a single thing. And now you come to tease me again, and frighten poor, dear, darling Ethel."

"Eet ees because she deceif me—she come wit a plot—she steal in here. Eef she had wait, all would be well."

"You mustn't *dare* to touch her," said Minnie, vehemently. "You *shall* leave her here. She *shall* stay with me."

"I am ver pain—oh, very; but oh, my angel—sweet—charming mees—eet ees dangaire to my lof. She plot to take you away. An' all my life is in you. Tink what I haf to do to gain you!"

Minnie looked upon Girasole, with her large eyes dilated with excitement and resentment.

"You are a horrid, horrid man," she exclaimed. "I *hate* you."

"Oh, my angel," pleaded Girasole, with deep agitation, "take back dat word."

"I'm sorry you ever saved my life," said Minnie, very calmly; "and I'm sorry I ever saw you. I *hate* you."

"Ah, you gif me torment. You do not mean dis. You say once you lof me."

"*I* did not say I loved *you*. It was *you* who said you loved *me*. *I* never liked *you*. And I don't really see how I *could* be engaged to you when I was engaged to another man before. He is the only one whom I recognize now. I don't know you at all. For I couldn't be bound to two men; could I, Ethel dear?"

Ethel did not reply to this strange question.

But upon Girasole its effect was very great. The manner of Minnie had been excessively perplexing to him all through this eventful day. If she had stormed and gone into a fine frenzy he could have borne it. It would have been natural. But she was perfectly unconcerned, and her only complaint was about trifles. Such trifles too! He felt ashamed to think that he could have subjected to such annoyances a woman whom he so dearly loved. And now he was once more puzzled. Minnie confronted him, looking at him fixedly, without one particle of fear, with her large, earnest, innocent eyes fastened upon his—with the calm, cool gaze of some high-minded child rebuking a younger child-companion. This was a proceeding which he was not prepared for. Besides, the child-innocence of her face and of her words actually daunted him. She seemed so fearless, because she was so innocent. She became a greater puzzle than ever. He had never seen much of her before, and this day's experience of her had actually daunted him and confounded him. And what was the worst to him of all her words was her calm and simple declaration, "I hate you!"

"Yes," said Minnie, thoughtfully, "it must be so; and dear Kitty would have said the same; only she was so awfully prejudiced. And I always thought he was *so* nice. Yes, I think I really must be engaged to him. But as for you," she said, turning full upon Girasole, "I hate you!"

Girasole's face grew white with rage and jealousy.

"Aha!" said he. "You lof *him*. Aha! An' you were engage to *him*. Aha!"

"Yes, I really think so."

"Aha! Well, listen," cried Girasole, in a hoarse voice—"listen. He—he—de rival—de one you say you are engage—he is dead!"

And with this he fastened upon Minnie his eyes that now gleamed with rage, and had an expression in them that might have made Ethel quiver with horror, but she did not, for she knew that Girasole was mistaken on that point.

As for Minnie, she was not at all impressed by his fierce looks.

"I don't think you really know what you're talking about," said she; "and you're very, very unpleasant. At any rate, you are altogether in the wrong when you say he is dead."

"Dead! He is dead! I swear it!" cried Girasole, whose manner was a little toned down by Minnie's coolness.

"This is getting to be awfully funny, you know," said Minnie. "I really think we don't know what one another is talking about. I'm sure *I* don't, and I'm sure *he* don't, either; does he, Ethel darling?"

"De Inglis milor," said Girasole. "He is dead."

"Well, but I don't mean him at all," said Minnie.

"Who—who?" gasped Girasole. "Who—who—who?"

"Why, the person I mean," said Minnie, very placidly, "is Rufus K. Gunn."

Girasole uttered something like a howl, and retreated.

CHAPTER XXXII.

UNDER ARREST.

GIRASOLE retreated half-way down the stairs, and then he stopped for some time and thought. Then he came back and motioned to Ethel.

"You must come," he said, gruffly.

"You shall not," said Minnie.

"No, no, darling," said Ethel; "I had better go. It will only get you into fresh trouble. And I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Oh, how I *hate* you!" said Minnie to Girasole. The latter said nothing. Ethel kissed Minnie, and descended the stairs after him.

The Irish priest was standing over the grave bathed in a cold perspiration, his heart throbbing violently, every new thud of the earth, as it sounded violently against the coffin, sending a cold chill of horror through every nerve. Already enough earth had been thrown to cover three-quarters of the lid, and at the foot it was heaped up some distance. He tried to frame some excuse to get the men away. His brain whirled; his mind was confused; his thoughts refused to be collected.

And now, in the midst of this, the attention of all was attracted by a loud stern voice, which sounded from some one near. The priest looked around. The men stopped shoveling, and turned to see the cause of the noise.

Girasole was seen approaching, and was already near enough to be distinguished. Behind him followed a female form. At this sight the priest's mind misgave him.

Girasole came up, and now the priest saw that the female was no other than Ethel.

"Where is this priest?" asked Girasole, angrily, speaking, of course, in Italian.

The priest advanced.

"I am here," said he, with quiet dignity.

At this change in the state of affairs the priest regained his presence of mind. The cessation in the work gave him relief, and enabled him to recall his scattered and confused thoughts. The men stood looking at the speakers, and listening, leaning on their shovels.

"You were sent for?"

"Yes."

"And a maid?"

"Yes."

"You brought this lady?"

"Yes."

"You put her in disguise; you passed her off as an Italian?"

"Yes."

The priest made no attempt at denial or equivocation. He knew that this would be useless. He waited for an opportunity to excuse himself, and to explain rather than to deny. But every answer of his only served to increase the fury of Girasole, who seemed determined to visit upon the head of the priest and Ethel the rage that he felt at his last interview with Minnie.

"Then why," cried Girasole, "did you try to trick us? Don't you know the punishment we give to spies and traitors?"

"I have nothing to do with spies and traitors."

"You are one yourself."

"I am not."

"You lie!"

"I do not," said the priest, mildly. "Hear me, and let me tell my story, and you will see that I am not a traitor; or, if you don't wish to listen, then question me."

"There is but one question. What made you bring this lady?"

"That is simply answered," said the priest, with unfaltering calmness. "This lady and her friends arrived at my village and claimed hospitality. They were in distress. Some of their friends had been taken from them. A message came from you requesting my presence, and also a lady's-maid. There was no stipulation about the kind of one. This lady was the intimate friend of the captive, and entreated me to take her, so that she should see her friend, and comfort her, and share her captivity. I saw no harm in the wish. She proposed to become a lady's-maid. I saw no harm in that."

"Why did she disguise herself?"

"So as to pass without trouble. She didn't want to be delayed. She wanted to see her friends as soon as possible. If you had questioned her, you would no doubt have let her pass."

"I would, no doubt, have done nothing of the kind."

"I don't see any objection," said the priest.

"Objection? She is a spy!"

"A spy? Of what, pray?"

"She came to help her friend to escape."

"To escape? How could she possibly help her to escape? Do you think it so easy to escape from this place?"

Girasole was silent.

"Do you think a young lady, who has never been out of the care of her friends before, could do much to assist a friend like herself in an escape?"

"She might."

"But how? This is not the street of a city. That house is watched, I think. There seem to be a few men in these woods, if I am not mistaken. Could this young lady help her friend to elude all these guards? Why, you know very well that she could not."

"Yes; but then there is—"

"Who?"

"Yourself."

"Myself?"

"Yes."

"What of me?"

"What do I know about your designs?"

"What designs could *I* have? Do you think *I* could plan an escape?"

"Why not?"

"Why not? What! living here close beside you? *I* be a traitor? *I*, with my life at your mercy at all times—with my throat within such easy reach of any assassin who might choose to revenge my treachery?"

"We are not assassins," said Girasole, angrily.

"And I am not a traitor," rejoined the priest, mildly.

UNDER GUARD.

Girasole was silent, and stood in thought. The men at the grave had heard every word of this conversation. Once they laughed in scorn when the priest alluded to the absurdity of a young girl escaping. It was too ridiculous. Their sympathies were evidently with the priest. The charge against him could not be maintained.

"Well," said Girasole at length, "I don't trust you. You may be traitors, after all. I will have you guarded, and if I find out any thing that looks like treason, by Heaven I will have your life, old man, even if you should be the Holy Father himself; and as to the lady—well, I will find plenty of ways," he added, with a sneer, "of inflicting on her a punishment commensurable with her crime. Here, you men, come along with me," he added, looking at the men by the grave.

"But we want to finish poor Antonio's grave," remonstrated one of the men.

"Bah! he'll keep," said Girasole, with a sneer.

"Can't one of us stay?" asked the man.

"No, not one; I want you all. If they are traitors, they are deep ones. They must be guarded; and, mind you, if they escape, you shall suffer."

With these words he led the way, and the priest and Ethel followed him. After these came the men, who had thrown down their shovels beside the grave. They all walked on in silence, following Girasole, who led the way to a place beyond the grave, and within view of one of the fires formerly alluded to. The place was about half-way between the grave and the fire. It was a little knoll bare of trees, and from it they could be seen by those at the nearest fire. Here Girasole paused, and, with some final words of warning to the guards, he turned and took his departure.

The priest sat down upon the grass, and urged Ethel to do the same. She followed his advice, and sat down by his side. The guards sat around them so as to encircle them, and, mindful of Girasole's charge, they kept their faces turned toward them, so as to prevent even the very thought of flight. The priest addressed a few mild parental words to the men, who gave him very civil responses, but relaxed not a particle of their vigilance.

In the priest's mind there was still some anxiety, but much greater hope than he had dared to have for some time. He remembered that the coffin was not all covered over, and hoped that the inmate might be able to breathe. The fact that the work had been so unexpectedly interrupted was one which filled him with joy, and gave rise to the best hopes. The only offset to all this was his own captivity, but that was a very serious one. Besides, he knew that his life hung upon a thread. Before the next day Girasole would certainly discover all, and in that case he was a doomed man. But his nature was of a kind that could not borrow trouble, and so the fact of the immediate safety of Hawbury was of far more importance, and attracted far more of his thoughts, than his own certain but more remote danger.

As for Ethel, she was now a prey to the deepest anxiety. All was discovered except the mere fact of Hawbury's removal, and how long that would remain concealed she could not know. Every moment she expected to hear the cry of those who might discover the exchange. And Hawbury, so long lost, so lately found—Hawbury, whom she had suspected of falsity so long and so long avoided, who now had proved himself so constant and so true—what was his fate? She had gazed with eyes of horror at that grave wherein he lay, and had seen the men shoveling in the earth as she came up. The recollection of this filled her with anguish. Had they buried him?—how deep was the earth that lay over him?—could there, indeed, be any hope?

All depended on the priest. She hoped that he had prevented things from going too far. She had seen him watching the grave, and motionless. What did that inactivity mean? Was it a sign that Hawbury was safe, or was it merely because he could not do any thing?

She was distracted by such fearful thoughts as these. Her heart once more throbbed with those painful pulsations which she had felt when approaching Hawbury. For some time she sat supporting her agony as best she could, and not daring to ask the priest, for fear their guards might suspect the truth, or perhaps understand her words.

But at last she could bear it no longer.

She touched the priest's arm as he sat beside her, without looking at him.

The priest returned the touch.

"Is he safe?" she asked, in a tremulous voice, which was scarce audible from grief and anxiety.

"He is," said the priest.

And then, looking at the man before him, he added immediately, in an unconcerned tone,

"She wants to know what time it is, and I told her two o'clock. That's right, isn't it?"

"About right," said the man.

Now that was a lie, but whether it was justifiable or not may be left to others to decide.

As for Ethel, an immense load of anxiety was lifted off her mind, and she began to breathe more freely.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DEMON WIFE.

When Dacres was overpowered by his assailants no mercy was shown him. His hands were bound tight behind him, and kicks and blows were liberally bestowed during the operation. Finally, he was pushed and dragged into the house, and up stairs to the room already mentioned. There he was still further secured by a tight rope around his ankles, after which he was left to his own meditations.

Gloomy and bitter and fierce, indeed, were those meditations. His body was covered with bruises, and though no bones were broken, yet his pain was great. In addition to this the cords around his wrists and ankles were very tight, and his veins seemed swollen to bursting. It was difficult to get an easy position, and he could only lie on his side or on his face. These bodily pains only intensified the fierceness of his thoughts and made them turn more vindictively than ever upon the subject of his wife.

She was the cause of all this, he thought. She had sacrificed every thing to her love for her accursed paramour. For this she had betrayed him, and her friends, and the innocent girl who was her companion. All the malignant feelings which had filled his soul through the day now swelled within him, till he was well-nigh mad. Most intolerable of all was his position now—the baffled enemy. He had come as the avenger, he had come as the destroyer; but he had been entrapped before he had struck his blow, and here he was now lying, defeated, degraded, and humiliated! No doubt he would be kept to afford sport to his enemy—perhaps even his wife might come to gloat over his sufferings, and feast her soul with the sight of his ruin. Over such thoughts as these he brooded, until at last he had wrought himself into something like frenzy; and with the pain that he felt, and the weariness that followed the fatigues of that day, these thoughts might finally have brought on madness, had they gone on without any thing to disturb them.

But all these thoughts and ravings were destined to come to a full and sudden stop, and to be changed to others of a far different character. This change took place when Girasole, after visiting the ladies, came, with Mrs. Willoughby, to his room. As Dacres lay on the floor he heard the voice of the Italian, and the faint, mournful, pleading tones of a woman's voice, and, finally, he saw the flash of a light, and knew that the Italian was coming to his room, and perhaps this woman also. He held his breath in suspense. What did it mean? The tone of Girasole was not the tone of love.

The light drew nearer, and the footsteps too—one a heavy footfall, the tread of a man; the other lighter, the step of a woman. He waited almost breathless.

At last she appeared. There she was before him, and with the Italian; but oh, how changed from that demon woman of his fancies, who

was to appear before him with his enemy and gloat over his sufferings! Was there a trace of a fiend in that beautiful and gentle face? Was there thought of joy or exultation over him in that noble and mournful lady, whose melancholy grace and tearful eyes now riveted his gaze? Where was the foul traitor who had done to death her husband and her friend? Where was the miscreant who had sacrificed all to a guilty passion? Not there; not with that face; not with those tears: to think that was impossible—it was unholy. He might rave when he did not see her, but now that his eyes beheld her those mad fancies were all dissipated.

There was only one thing there—a woman full of loveliness and grace, in the very bloom of her life, overwhelmed with suffering which this Italian was inflicting on her. Why? Could he indulge the unholy thought that the Italian had cast her off, and supplied her place with the younger beauty? Away with such a thought! It was not jealousy of that younger lady that Dacres perceived; it was the cry of a loving, yearning heart that clung to that other one, from whom the Italian had violently severed her. There was no mistake as to the source of this sorrow. Nothing was left to the imagination. Her own words told all.

Then the light was taken away, and the lady crouched upon the floor. Dacres could no longer see her amidst that gloom; but he could hear her; and every sob, and every sigh, and every moan went straight to his heart and thrilled through every fibre of his being. He lay there listening, and quivering thus as he listened with a very intensity of sympathy that shut out from his mind every other thought except that of the mourning, stricken one before him.

Thus a long time passed, and the lady wept still, and other sounds arose, and there were footsteps in the house, and whisperings, and people passing to and fro; but to all these Dacres was deaf, and they caused no more impression on his senses than if they were not. His ears and his sense of hearing existed only for these sobs and these sighs.

At last a pistol-shot roused him. The lady sprang up and called in despair. A cry came back, and the lady was about to venture to the other room, when she was driven back by the stern voice of Girasole. Then she stood for a moment, after which she knelt, and Dacres heard her voice in prayer. The prayer was not audible, but now and then words struck upon his ears which gave the key to her other words, and he knew that it was no prayer of remorse for guilt, but a cry for help in sore affliction.

Had any thing more been needed to destroy the last vestige of Dacres's former suspicions it was furnished by the words which he now heard.

"Oh, Heaven!" he thought; "can this woman be what I have thought her? But if not, what a villain am I! Yet now I must rather believe myself to be a villain than her!"

In the midst of this prayer Girasole's voice sounded, and then Minnie's tones came clearly audible. The lady rose and listened, and a great sigh of relief escaped her. Then Girasole descended the stairs, and the lady again sank upon her knees.

Thus far there seemed a spell upon Dacres; but this last incident and the clear child-voice of Minnie seemed to break it. He could no longer keep silence. His emotion was as intense as ever, but the bonds which had bound his lips seemed now to be loosened.

"Oh, Arethusa!" he moaned.

At the sound of his voice Mrs. Willoughby started, and rose to her feet. So great had been her anxiety and agitation that for some time she had not thought of another being in the room, and there had been no sound from him to suggest his existence. But now his voice startled her. She gave no answer, however.

"Arethusa!" repeated Dacres, gently and longingly and tenderly.

"Poor fellow!" thought Mrs. Willoughby; "he's dreaming."

"Arethusa! oh, Arethusa!" said Dacres once more. "Do not keep away. Come to me. I am calm now."

"Poor fellow!" thought Mrs. Willoughby. "He doesn't seem to be asleep. He's talking to me. I really think he is."

"Arethusa," said Dacres again, "will you answer me one question?"

Mrs. Willoughby hesitated for a moment, but now perceived that Dacres was really speaking to her. "He's in delirium," she thought. "Poor fellow, I must humor him, I suppose. But what a funny name to give me!"

So, after a little preparatory cough, Mrs. Willoughby said, in a low voice,

"What question?"

Dacres was silent for a few moments. He was overcome by his emotions. He wished to ask her one question—the question of all questions in his mind. Already her acts had answered it sufficiently; but he longed to have the answer in her own words. Yet he hesitated to ask it. It was dishonor to her to ask it. And thus, between longing and hesitation, he delayed so long that Mrs. Willoughby imagined that he had fallen back into his dreams or into his delirium, and would say no more.

But at last Dacres staked every thing on the issue, and asked it:

"Arethusa! oh, Arethusa! do you—do you love—the—the Italian?"

"The Italian!" said Mrs. Willoughby—"love the Italian! me!" and then in a moment she thought that this was his delirium, and she must humor it. "Poor fellow!" she sighed again; "how he fought them! and no doubt he has had fearful blows on his head."

"Do you? do you? Oh, answer, I implore you!" cried Dacres.

"No!" said Mrs. Willoughby, solemnly. "I hate him as I never hated man before." She

spoke her mind this time, although she thought the other was delirious.

A sigh of relief and of happiness came from Dacres, so deep that it was almost a groan.

"And oh," he continued, "tell me this—have you ever loved him at all?"

"I always disliked him excessively," said Mrs. Willoughby, in the same low and solemn tone. "I saw something bad—altogether bad—in his face."

"Oh, may Heaven forever bless you for that word!" exclaimed Dacres, with such a depth of fervor that Mrs. Willoughby was surprised. She now believed that he was intermingling dreams with realities, and tried to lead him to sense by reminding him of the truth.

"It was Minnie, you know, that he was fond of."

"What! Minnie Ray?"

"Yes; oh yes. *I* never saw any thing of him."

"Oh, Heavens!" cried Dacres; "oh, Heavens, what a fool, beast, villain, and scoundrel I have been! Oh, how I have misjudged *you!* And can *you* forgive me? Oh, can you? But no—you can not."

At this appeal Mrs. Willoughby was startled, and did not know what to say or to do. How much of this was delirium and how much real she could not tell. One thing seemed evident to her, and that was that, whether delirious or not, he took her for another person. But she was so full of pity for him, and so very tender-hearted, that her only idea was to "humor" him.

"Oh," he cried again, "can this all be true, and have all my suspicions been as mad as these last? And *you*—how *you* have changed! How beautiful you are! What tenderness there is in your glance—what a pure and gentle and touching grace there is in your expression! I swear to you, by Heaven! I have stood gazing at you in places where you have not seen me, and thought I saw heaven in your face, and worshiped you in my inmost soul. This is the reason why I have followed you. From the time I saw you when you came into the room at Naples till this night I could not get rid of your image. I fought against the feeling, but I can not overcome it. Never, never were you half so dear as you are now!"

Now, of course, that was all very well, considered as the language of an estranged husband seeking for reconciliation with an estranged wife; but when one regards it simply as the language of a passionate lover directed to a young and exceedingly pretty widow, one will perceive that it was *not* all very well, and that under ordinary circumstances it might create a sensation.

Upon Mrs. Willoughby the sensation was simply tremendous. She had begun by "humoring" the delirious man; but now she found his delirium taking a course which was excessively embarrassing. The worst of it was, there was truth enough in his language to increase the embarrassment. She remembered at once how the mournful face of this man had appeared before her in different places. Her thoughts instantly reverted to that evening on the balcony when his pale face appeared behind the fountain. There was truth in his words; and her heart beat with extraordinary agitation at the thought. Yet at the same time there was some mistake about it all; and he was clearly delirious.

"Oh, Heavens!" he cried. "Can you ever forgive me? Is there a possibility of it? Oh, can you forgive me? Can you—can you?"

He was clearly delirious now. Her heart was full of pity for him. He was suffering top. He was bound fast. Could she not release him? It was terrible for this man to lie there bound thus. And perhaps he had fallen into the hands of these ruffians while trying to save *her* and her sister. She must free him.

"Would you like to be loosed?" she asked, coming nearer. "Shall I cut your bonds?"

She spoke in a low whisper.

"Oh, tell me first, I implore you! Can you forgive me?"

He spoke in such a piteous tone that her heart was touched.

"Forgive you?" she said, in a voice full of sympathy and pity. "There is nothing for *me* to forgive."

"Now may Heaven forever bless you for that sweet and gentle word!" said Dacres, who altogether misinterpreted her words, and the emphasis she placed on them; and in his voice there was such peace, and such a gentle, exultant happiness, that Mrs. Willoughby again felt touched.

"Poor fellow!" she thought; "how he *must* have suffered!"

"Where are you fastened?" she whispered, as she bent over him. Dacres felt her breath upon his cheek; the hem of her garment touched his sleeve, and a thrill passed through him. He felt as though he would like to be forever thus, with *her* bending over him.

"My hands are fastened behind me," said he.

"I have a knife," said Mrs. Willoughby. She did not stop to think of danger. It was chiefly pity that incited her to this. She could not bear to see him lying thus in pain, which he had perhaps, as she supposed, encountered for her. She was impulsive, and though she thought of his assistance toward the escape of Minnie and herself, yet pity and compassion were her chief inspiring motives.

Mrs. Willoughby had told Girasole that she had no knife; but this was not quite true, for she now produced one, and cut the cords that bound his wrists. Again a thrill flashed through him at the touch of her little fingers; she then cut the cords that bound his ankles.

Dacres sat up. His ankles and wrists were badly swollen, but he was no longer conscious of pain. There was rapture in his soul, and of that alone was he conscious.

"Be careful!" she whispered, warningly;

"guards are all around, and listeners. Be careful! If you can think of a way of escape, do so."

Dacres rubbed his hand over his forehead.

"Am I dreaming?" said he; "or is it all true? A while ago I was suffering from some hideous vision; yet now you say you forgive me!"

Mrs. Willoughby saw in this a sign of returning delirium. "But the poor fellow must be humored, I suppose," she thought.

"Oh, there is nothing for *me* to forgive," said she.

"But if there were any thing, would you?"

"Yes."

"Freely?" he cried, with a strong emphasis.

"Yes, freely."

"Oh, could you answer me one more question? Oh, could you?"

"No, no; not now—not now, I entreat you," said Mrs. Willoughby, in nervous dread. She was afraid that his delirium would bring him upon delicate ground, and she tried to hold him back.

"But I must ask you," said Dacres, trembling fearfully—"I must—now or never. Tell me my doom; I have suffered so much. Oh, Heavens! Answer me. Can you? Can you feel toward me as you once did?"

"He's utterly mad," thought Mrs. Willoughby; "but he'll get worse if I don't soothe him. Poor fellow! I ought to answer him."

"Yes," she said, in a low voice.

"Oh, my darling!" murmured Dacres, in rapture inexpressible; "my darling!" he repeated; and grasping Mrs. Willoughby's hand, he pressed it to his lips. "And you will love me again—you will love me?"

Mrs. Willoughby paused. The man was mad, but the ground was so dangerous! Yes, she must humor him. She felt his hot kisses on her hand.

"You *will*—you *will* love me, will you not?" he repeated. "Oh, answer me! Answer me, or I shall die!"

"Yes," whispered Mrs. Willoughby, faintly.

As she said this a cold chill passed through her. But it was too late. Dacres's arms were around her. He had drawn her to him, and pressed her against his breast, and she felt hot tears upon her head.

"Oh, Arethusa!" cried Dacres.

"Well," said Mrs. Willoughby, as soon as she could extricate herself, "there's a mistake, you know."

"A mistake, darling?"

"Oh dear, what *shall* I do?" thought Mrs. Willoughby; "he's beginning again. I must stop this, and bring him to his senses. How terrible it is to humor a delirious man!"

"Oh, Arethusa!" sighed Dacres once more.

Mrs. Willoughby arose.

"I'm not Arethusa at all," said she; "that isn't my name. If you *can* shake off your delirium, I wish you would. I really do."

"What!" cried Dacres, in amazement.

"I'm not Arethusa at all; that isn't my name."

"Not your name?"

"No; my name's Kitty."

"Kitty!" cried Dacres, starting to his feet.

At that instant the report of a gun burst upon their ears, followed by another and another; then there were wild calls and loud shouts. Other guns were heard.

Yet amidst all this wild alarm there was nothing which had so tremendous an effect upon Dacres as this last remark of Mrs. Willoughby's.

"THE PRIEST FLUNG HIMSELF FORWARD."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CRISIS OF LIFE.

When the Irish priest conjectured that it was about two o'clock in the morning he was not very far astray in his calculation. The short remarks that were exchanged between him and Ethel, and afterward between him and the men, were followed by a profound silence. Ethel sat by the side of the priest, with her head bent forward and her eyes closed as though she were asleep; yet sleep was further from her than ever it had been, and the thrilling events of the night afforded sufficient material to keep her awake for many a long hour yet to come. Her mind was now filled with a thousand conflicting and most exciting fancies, in the midst of which she might again have sunk into despair had she not been sustained by the assurance of the priest.

Sitting near Ethel, the priest for some time

looked fixedly ahead of him as though he were contemplating the solemn midnight scene, or meditating upon the beauties of nature. In truth, the scene around was one which was deserving even of the close attention which the priest appeared to give. Immediately before him lay the lake, its shore not far beneath, and almost at their feet. Around it arose the wooded hills, whose dark forms, darker from the gloom of night, threw profound shadows over the opposite shores. Near by the shore extended on either side. On the right there were fires, now burning low, yet occasionally sending forth flashes; on the left, and at some distance, might be seen the dusky outline of the old stone house. Behind them was the forest, vast, gloomy, clothed in impenetrable shade, in which lay their only hope of safety, yet where even now there lurked the watchful guards of the brigands. It was close behind them. Once in its shelter, and they might gain freedom; yet between them and it was an impassable barrier of enemies, and there also lay a still more impassable barrier in the grave where Hawbury lay. To fly, even if they could fly, would be to give him up to death; yet to remain, as they must remain, would be to doom him to death none the less, and themselves too.

Seated there, with his eyes directed toward the water, the priest saw nothing of the scene before him; his eyes were fixed on vacancy; his thoughts were endeavoring to grapple with the situation and master it. Yet so complicated was that situation, and so perplexing the dilemma in which he found himself—a dilemma where death perched upon either horn—that the good priest found his faculties becoming gradually more and more unable to deal with the difficulty, and he felt himself once more sinking down deeper and deeper into that abyss of despair from which he had but recently extricated himself.

And still the time passed, and the precious moments, laden with the fate not only of Hawbury, but of all the others—the moments of the night during which alone any escape was to be thought of—moved all too swiftly away.

Now in this hour of perplexity the good priest bethought him of a friend whose fidelity had been proved through the varied events of a life—a friend which, in his life of celibacy, had found in his heart something of that place which a fond and faithful wife may hold in the heart of a more fortunate man. It was a little friend, a fragrant friend, a tawny and somewhat grimy friend; it was in the pocket of his coat; it was of clay; in fact, it was nothing else than a dudeen.

Where in the world had the good priest who lived in this remote corner of Italy got that emblem of his green native isle? Perhaps he had brought it with him in the band of his hat when he first turned his back upon his country, or perhaps he had obtained it from the same quarter which had supplied him with that very black plug of tobacco which he brought forth shortly afterward. The one was the complement of the other, and each was handled with equal love and care. Soon the occupation of cutting up the tobacco and rubbing it gave a temporary distraction to his thoughts, which distraction was prolonged by the further operation of pressing the tobacco into the bowl of the dudeen.

Here the priest paused and cast a longing look toward the fire, which was not far away.

"Would you have any objection to let me go and get a coal to light the pipe?" said he to one of the men.

The man had an objection, and a very strong one.

"Would one of you be kind enough to go and get me a brand or a hot coal?"

This led to an earnest debate, and finally one of the men thought that he might venture. Before doing so, however, a solemn promise was extorted from the priest that he would not try to escape during his absence. This the priest gave.

"Escape!" he said—"it's a smoke I want. Besides, how can I escape with three of ye watching me? And then, what would I want to escape for? I'm safe enough here."

The man now went off, and returned in a short time with a brand. The priest gave him his blessing, and received the brand with a quiet exultation that was pleasing to behold.

"Matches," said he, "ruin the smoke. They give it a sulphur taste. There's nothing like a hot coal."

Saying this, he lighted his pipe. This operation was accomplished with a series of those short, quick, hard, percussive puffs with which the Irish race in every clime on this terrestrial ball perform the solemn rite.

And now the thoughts of the priest became more calm and regular and manageable. His confusion departed, and gradually, as the smoke ascended to the skies, there was diffused over his soul a certain soothing and all-pervading calm.

He now began to face the full difficulty of his position. He saw that escape was impossible and death inevitable. He made up his mind to die. The discovery would surely be made in the morning that Hawbury had been substituted for the robber; he would be found and punished, and the priest would be involved in his fate. His only care now was for Ethel; and he turned his thoughts toward the formation of some plan by which he might obtain mercy for her.

He was in the midst of these thoughts—for himself resigned, for Ethel anxious—and turning over in his mind all the various modes by which the emotion of pity or mercy might be roused in a merciless and pitiless nature; he was thinking of an appeal to the brigands themselves, and had already decided that in this there lay his best hope of success—when all of a sudden these thoughts were rudely interrupted and

dissipated and scattered to the winds by a most startling cry.

Ethel started to her feet.

"Oh Heavens!" she cried, "what was that?"

"Down! down!" cried the men, wrathfully; but before Ethel could obey the sound was repeated, and the men themselves were arrested by it.

The sound that thus interrupted the meditations of the priest was the explosion of a rifle. As Ethel started up another followed. This excited the men themselves, who now listened intently to learn the cause.

They did not have to wait long.

Another rifle explosion followed, which was succeeded by a loud, long shriek.

"An attack!" cried one of the men, with a deep curse. They listened still, yet did not move away from the place, for the duty to which they had been assigned was still prominent in their minds. The priest had already risen to his feet, still smoking his pipe, as though in this new turn of affairs its assistance might be more than ever needed to enable him to preserve his presence of mind, and keep his soul serene in the midst of confusion.

And now they saw all around them the signs of agitation. Figures in swift motion flitted to and fro amidst the shade, and others darted past the smouldering fires. In the midst of this another shot sounded, and another, and still another. At the third there was a wild yell of rage and pain, followed by the shrill cry of a woman's voice. The fact was evident that some one of the brigands had fallen, and the women were lamenting.

The confusion grew greater. Loud cries arose; calls of encouragement, of entreaty, of command, and of defiance. Over by the old house there was the uproar of rushing men, and in the midst of it a loud, stern voice of command. The voices and the rushing footsteps moved from the house to the woods. Then all was still for a time.

It was but for a short time, however. Then came shot after shot in rapid succession. The flashes could be seen among the trees. All around them there seemed to be a struggle going on. There was some unseen assailant striking terrific blows from the impenetrable shadow of the woods. The brigands were firing back, but they fired only into thick darkness. Shrieks and yells of pain arose from time to time, the direction of which showed that the brigands were suffering. Among the assailants there was neither voice nor cry. But, in spite of their losses and the disadvantage under which they labored, the brigands fought well, and resisted stubbornly. From time to time a loud, stern voice arose, whose commands resounded far and wide, and sustained the courage of the men and directed their movements.

The men who guarded the priest and Ethel were growing more and more excited every moment, and were impatient at their enforced inaction.

"They must be soldiers," said one.

"Of course," said another.

"They fight well."

"Ay; better than the last time."

"How did they learn to fight so well under cover?"

"They've improved. The last time we met them we shot them like sheep, and drove them back in five minutes."

"They've got a leader who understands fighting in the woods. He keeps them under cover."

"Who is he?"

"Diavolo! who knows? They get new captains every day."

"Was there not a famous American Indian—"

"True. I heard of him. An Indian warrior from the American forests. Guiseppe saw him when he was at Rome."

"Bah!—you all saw him."

"Where?"

"On the road."

"We didn't."

"You did. He was the Zouave who fled to the woods first."

"He?"

"Yes."

"Diavolo!"

These words were exchanged between them as they looked at the fighting. But suddenly there came rapid flashes and rolling volleys beyond the fires that lay before them, and the movement of the flashes showed that a rush had been made toward the lake. Wild yells arose, then fierce returning fires, and these showed that the brigands were being driven back.

The guards could endure this no longer.

"They are beating us," cried one of the men, with a curse. "We must go and fight."

"What shall we do with these prisoners?"

"Tie them and leave them."

"Have you a rope?"

"No. There is one by the grave."

"Let's take the prisoners there and bind them."

This proposition was accepted; and, seizing the priest and Ethel, the four men hurried them back to the grave. The square hole lay there just beside them, with the earth by its side. Ethel tried to see into it, but was not near enough to do so. One of the men found the rope, and began in great haste to bind the arms of the priest behind him. Another began to bind Ethel in the same way.

But now there came loud cries, and the rush of men near them. A loud, stern voice was encouraging the men.

"On! on!" he cried. "Follow me! We'll drive them back!"

Saying this, a man hurried on, followed by a score of brigands.

It was Girasole.

He had been guarding the woods at this side when he had seen the rush that had been made farther up. He had seen his men driven in, and was now hurrying up to the place to retrieve the battle. As he was running on he came up to the party at the grave.

He stopped.

"What's this?" he cried.

"The prisoners—we were securing them."

It was now lighter than it had been, and dawn was not far off. The features of Girasole were plainly distinguishable. They were convulsed with the most furious passion, which was not caused so much by the rage of conflict as by the sight of the prisoners. He had suspected treachery on their part, and had spared them for a time only so as to see whether his suspicions were true or not. But now this sudden assault by night, conducted so skillfully, and by such a powerful force, pointed clearly to treachery, as he saw it, and the ones who to him seemed most prominent in guilt were the priest and Ethel.

His suspicions were quite reasonable under the circumstances. Here was a priest whom he regarded as his natural enemy. These brigands identified themselves with republicans and Garibaldians whenever it suited their purposes to do so, and consequently, as such, they were under the condemnation of the Pope; and any priest might think he was doing the Pope good service by betraying those who were his enemies. As to this priest, every thing was against him. He lived close by; every step of the country was no doubt familiar to him; he had come to the camp under very suspicious circumstances, bringing with him a stranger in disguise. He had given plausible answers to the cross-questioning of Girasole; but those were empty words, which went for nothing in the presence of the living facts that now stood before him in the presence of the enemy.

These thoughts had all occurred to Girasole, and the sight of the two prisoners kindled his rage to madness. It was the deadliest purpose of vengeance that gleamed in his eyes as he looked upon them, and they knew it. He gave one glance, and then turned to his men.

"On! on!" he cried; "I will join you in an instant; and you," he said to the guards, "wait a moment."

The brigands rushed on with shouts to assist their comrades in the fight, while the other four waited.

All this time the fight had not ceased. The air was filled with the reports of rifle-shots, the shouts of men, the yells of the wounded. The flashes seemed to be gradually drawing nearer, as though the assailants were still driving the brigands. But their progress was slow, for the fighting was carried on among the trees, and the brigands resisted stubbornly, retreating from cover to cover, and stopping every moment to make a fresh stand. But the assailants had gained much ground, and were already close by the borders of the lake, and advancing along toward the old stone house.

The robbers had not succeeded in binding their prisoners. The priest and Ethel both stood where they had encountered Girasole, and the ropes fell from the robbers' hands at the new interruption. The grave with its mound was only a few feet away.

Girasole had a pistol in his left hand and a sword in his right. He sheathed his sword and drew another pistol, keeping his eyes fixed steadily all the while upon his victims.

"You needn't bind these prisoners," said Girasole, grimly; "I know a better way to secure them."

"In the name of God," cried the priest, "I implore you not to shed innocent blood!"

"Pooh!" said Girasole.

"This lady is innocent; you will at least spare her!"

"She shall die first!" said Girasole, in a fury, and reached out his hand to grasp Ethel. The priest flung himself forward between the two. Girasole dashed him aside.

"Give us time to pray, for God's sake—one moment to pray!"

"Not a moment!" cried Girasole, grasping at Ethel.

Ethel gave a loud shriek and started away in horror. Girasole sprang after her. The four men turned to seize her. With a wild and frantic energy, inspired by the deadly terror that was in her heart, she bounded away toward the grave.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BURIED ALIVE.

HAWBURY last vanished from the scene to a place which is but seldom resorted to by a living man. Once inside of his terrible retreat he became a prey to feelings of the most varied and harrowing character, in the midst of which there was a suspense, twofold, agonizing, and intolerable. First of all, his suspense was for Ethel, and then for himself. In that narrow and restricted retreat his senses soon became sharpened to an unusual degree of acuteness. Every touch against it communicated itself to his frame, as though the wood of his inclosure had become part of himself; and every sound intensified itself to an extraordinary degree of distinctness, as though the temporary loss of vision had been compensated for by an exaggeration of the sense of hearing. This was particularly the case as the priest drove in the screws. He heard the shuffle on the stairs, the whisper to Ethel, her retreat, and the ascending footsteps; while at the same time he was aware of the unalterable coolness of the priest, who kept calmly at his work until the very last moment. The screws seemed to enter his own frame, and the slight noise which was made, inaudible as it was to others, to him seemed loud enough to rouse all in the house.

Then he felt himself raised and carried down stairs. Fortunately he had got in with his feet toward the door, and as that end was carried out first, his descent of the stairs was not attended with the inconvenience which he might have felt had it been taken down in an opposite direction.

One fact gave him very great relief, for he had feared that his breathing would be difficult. Thanks, however, to the precautions of the priest, he felt no difficulty at all in that respect. The little bits of wood which prevented the lid from resting close to the coffin formed apertures which freely admitted all the air that was necessary.

He was borne on thus from the house toward the grave, and heard the voice of the priest from time to time, and rightly supposed that the remarks of the priest were addressed not so much to the brigands as to himself, so as to let him know that he was not deserted. The journey to the grave was accomplished without any inconvenience, and the coffin was at length put upon the ground.

Then it was lowered into the grave.

There was something in this which was so horrible to Hawbury that an involuntary shudder passed through every nerve, and all the terror of the grave and the bitterness of death in that one moment seemed to descend upon him. He had not thought of this, and consequently was not prepared for it. He had expected that he would be put down somewhere on the ground, and that the priest would be able to get rid of the men, and effect his liberation before it had gone so far.

It required an effort to prevent himself from crying out; and longer efforts were needed and more time before he could regain any portion of his self-control. He now heard the priest performing the burial rites; these seemed to him to be protracted to an amazing length; and so, indeed, they were; but to the inmate of that grave the time seemed longer far than it did to those who were outside. A thousand thoughts swept through his mind, and a thousand fears swelled within his heart. At last the suspicion came to him that the priest himself was unable to do any better, and this suspicion was confirmed as he detected the efforts which he made to get the men to leave the grave. This was particularly evident when he pretended to hear an alarm, by which he hoped to get rid of the brigands. It failed, however, and with this failure the hopes of Hawbury sank lower than ever.

But the climax of his horror was attained as the first clod fell upon his narrow abode. It seemed like a death-blow. He felt it as if it had struck himself, and for a moment it was as though he had been stunned. The dull, heavy sound which those heard who stood above, to his ears became transformed and enlarged, and extended to something like a thunder-peal, with long reverberations through his now fevered and distempered brain. Other clods fell, and still others, and the work went on till his brain reeled, and under the mighty emotions of the hour his reason began to give way. Then all his fortitude and courage sank. All thought left him save the consciousness of the one horror that had now fixed itself upon his soul. It was intolerable. In another moment his despair would have overmastered him, and under its impulse he would have burst through all restraint, and turned all his energies toward forcing himself from his awful prison house.

He turned himself over. He gathered himself up as well as he could. Already he was bracing himself for a mighty effort to burst up the lid, when suddenly the voice of Girasole struck upon his ear, and a wild fear for Ethel came to his heart, and the anguish of that fear checked at once all further thought of himself.

He lay still and listened. He did this the more patiently as the men also stopped from their work, and as the hideous earth-clods no longer fell down. He listened. From the conversation he gathered pretty accurately the state of affairs. He knew that Ethel was there; that she had been discovered and dragged forth; that she was in danger. He listened in the anguish of a new suspense. He heard the words of the priest, his calm denial of treachery, his quiet appeal to Girasole's good sense. Then he heard the decision of Girasole, and the party walked away with their prisoners, and he was left alone.

Alone!

At any other time it would have been a terrible thing thus to be left alone in such a place, but now to him who was thus imprisoned it afforded a great relief. The work of burial, with all its hideous accompaniments, was stayed. He could collect his senses and make up his mind as to what he should do.

Now, first of all, he determined to gain more air if possible. The earth that had fallen had covered up many of the chinks, so that his breathing had become sensibly more difficult. His confinement, with this oppression of his breathing, was intolerable. He therefore braced himself once more to make an effort. The coffin was large and rudely constructed, being merely an oblong box. He had more play to his limbs than he could have had in one of a more regular construction, and thus he was able to bring a great effort to bear upon the lid. He pressed. The screws gave way. He lifted it up to some distance. He drew in a long draught of fresh air, and felt in that one draught that he received new life and strength and hope.

He now lay still and thought about what he should do next. If it had only been himself, he would, of course, have escaped in that first instant, and fled to the woods. But the thought of Ethel detained him.

What was her position; and what could he do to save her? This was his thought.

He knew that she, together with the priest,

"IN AN INSTANT THE OCCUPANT OF THE GRAVE SPRANG FORTH."

was in the hands of four of the brigands, who were commanded to keep their prisoners safe at the peril of their lives. Where they were he did not know, nor could he tell whether she was near or at a distance. Girasole had led them away.

He determined to look out and watch. He perceived that this grave, in the heart of the brigands' camp, afforded the very safest place in which he could be for the purpose of watching. Girasole's words had indicated that the work of burial would not be resumed that night, and if any passers-by should come they would avoid such a place as this. Here, then, he could stay until dawn at least, and watch unobserved. Perhaps he could find where Ethel was guarded; perhaps he could do something to distract the attention of the brigands, and afford her an opportunity for flight.

He now arose, and, kneeling in the coffin, he raised the lid. The earth that was upon it fell down inside. He tilted the lid up, and holding it up thus with one hand, he put his head carefully out of the grave, and looked out in the direction where Girasole had gone with his prisoners. The knoll to which he had led them was a very conspicuous place, and had probably been selected for that reason, since it could be under his own observation, from time to time, even at a distance. It was about halfway between the grave and the nearest fire, which fire, though low, still gave forth some light, and the light was in a line with the knoll to Hawbury's eyes. The party on the knoll, therefore, appeared thrown out into relief by the faint fire-light behind them, especially the priest and Ethel.

And now Hawbury kept his watch, and looked and listened and waited, ever mindful of his own immediate neighborhood, and guarding carefully against any approach. But his own place was in gloom, and no one would have thought of looking there, so that he was unobserved.

But all his watching gave him no assistance toward finding out any way of rescuing Ethel. He saw the vigilant guard around the prisoners. Once or twice he saw a movement among

them, but it was soon over, and resulted in nothing. Now he began to despond, and to speculate in his mind as to whether Ethel was in any danger or not. He began to calculate the time that might be required to go for help with which to attack the brigands. He wondered what reason Girasole might have to injure Ethel. But whatever hope he had that mercy might be shown her was counterbalanced by his own experience of Girasole's cruelty, and his knowledge of his merciless character.

Suddenly he was roused by the rifle-shot and the confusion that followed. He saw the party on the mound start to their feet. He heard the shots that succeeded the first one. He saw shadows darting to and fro. Then the confusion grew worse, and all the sounds of battle arose—the cries, the shrieks, and the stern words of command.

All this filled him with hope. An attack was being made. They might all be saved. He could see that the brigands were being driven back, and that the assailants were pressing on.

Then he saw the party moving from the knoll. It was already much lighter. They advanced toward him. He sank down and waited. He had no fear now that this party would complete his burial. He thought they were flying with the prisoners. If so, the assailants would soon be here; he could join them, and lead them on to the rescue of Ethel.

He lay low with the lid over him. He heard them close beside him. Then there was the noise of rushing men, and Girasole's voice arose.

He heard all that followed.

Then Ethel's shriek sounded out, as she sprang toward the grave.

In an instant the occupant of the grave, seizing the lid, raised it up, and with a wild yell sprang forth.

The effect was tremendous.

The brigands thought the dead Antonio had come to life. They did not stop to look, but with a howl of awful terror, and in an anguish of fright, they turned and ran for their lives!

Girasole saw him too, with equal horror, if not greater. He saw Hawbury. It was the man whom he had killed stone-dead with his own hand. He was there before him—or was it his ghost? For an instant horror paralyzed him; and then, with a yell like a madman's, he leaped back and fled after the others.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FLY! FLY!

In the midst of that wild uproar which had roused Dacres and Mrs. Willoughby there was nothing that startled him so much as her declaration that she was not Arethusa. He stood bewildered. While she was listening to the sounds, he was listening to the echo of her words; while she was wondering at the cause of such a tumult, he was wondering at this disclosure. In a moment a thousand little things suggested themselves as he stood there in his confusion, which little things all went to throw a flood of light upon her statement, and prove that she was another person than that "demon wife" who had been the cause of all his woes. Her soft glance, her gentle manner, her sweet and tender expression—above all, the tone of her voice; all these at once opened his eyes. In the course of their conversation she had spoken in a low tone, often in a whisper, so that this fact with regard to the difference of voice had not been perceptible; but her last words were spoken louder, and he observed the difference.

Now the tumult grew greater, and the reports of the rifles more frequent. The noise was communicated to the house, and in the rooms and the hall below there were tramplings of feet, and hurryings to and fro, and the rattle of arms, and the voices of men, in the midst of which rose the stern command of Girasole.

"Forward! Follow me!"

Then the distant reports grew nearer and yet nearer, and all the men rushed from the house, and their tramp was heard outside as they hurried away to the scene of conflict.

"It's an attack! The brigands are attacked!" cried Mrs. Willoughby.

Dacres said nothing. He was collecting his scattered thoughts.

"Oh, may Heaven grant that we may be saved! Oh, it is the troops—it must be! Oh, Sir, come, come; help us to escape! My darling sister is here. Save her!"

"Your sister?" cried Dacres.

"Oh yes; come, save her! My sister—my darling Minnie!"

With these words Mrs. Willoughby rushed from the room.

"Her sister! her sister!" repeated Dacres—"Minnie Fay! *Her* sister! Good Lord! What a most infernal ass I've been making of myself this last month!"

He stood still for a few moments, overwhelmed by this thought, and apparently endeavoring to realize the full extent and enormous size and immense proportions, together with the infinite extent of ear, appertaining to the ass to which he had transformed himself; but finally he shook his head despondingly, as though he gave it up altogether. Then he hurried after Mrs. Willoughby.

Mrs. Willoughby rushed into Minnie's room, and clasped her sister in her arms with frantic tears and kisses.

"Oh, my precious darling!" she exclaimed.

"Oh dear!" said Minnie, "isn't this really too bad? I was *so* tired, you know, and I was just beginning to go to sleep, when those horrid men began firing their guns. I really do think that every body is banded together to tease me.

I do *wish* they'd all go away and let me have a little peace. I am *so* tired and sleepy!"

While Minnie was saying this her sister was embracing her and kissing her and crying over her.

"Oh, come, Minnie, come!" she cried; "make haste. We must fly!"

"Where to?" said Minnie, wonderingly.

"Any where—any where out of this awful place: into the woods."

"Why, I don't see the use of going into the woods. It's all wet, you know. Can't we get a carriage?"

"Oh no, no; we must not wait. They'll all be back soon and kill us."

"Kill us! What for?" cried Minnie. "What do you mean? How silly you are, Kitty darling!"

At this moment Dacres entered. The image of the immeasurable ass was still very prominent in his mind, and he had lost all his fever and delirium. One thought only remained (besides that of the ass, of course), and that was—escape.

"Are you ready?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Oh yes, yes; let us make haste," said Mrs. Willoughby.

"I think no one is below," said he; "but I will go first. There is a good place close by. We will run there. If I fall, you must run on and try to get there. It is the bank just opposite. Once there, you are in the woods. Do you understand?"

"Oh yes, yes!" cried Mrs. Willoughby. "Haste! Oh, haste!"

Dacres turned, and Mrs. Willoughby had just grasped Minnie's hand to follow, when suddenly they heard footsteps below.

They stopped, appalled.

The robbers had not all gone, then. Some of them must have remained on guard. But how many?

Dacres listened and the ladies listened, and in their suspense the beating of each heart was audible. The footsteps below could be heard going from room to room, and pausing in each.

"There seems to be only one man," said Dacres, in a whisper. "If there is only one, I'll engage to manage him. While I grapple, you run for your lives. Remember the bank."

"Oh yes; but oh, Sir, there may be more," said Mrs. Willoughby.

"I'll see," said Dacres, softly.

He went cautiously to the front window and looked out. By the increased light he could see quite plainly. No men were visible. From afar the noise of the strife came to his ears louder than ever, and he could see the flashes of the rifles.

Dacres stole back again from the window and went to the door. He stood and listened.

And now the footsteps came across the hall to the foot of the stairs. Dacres could see the figure of a solitary man, but it was dark in the hall, and he could not make him out.

He began to think that there was only one enemy to encounter.

The man below put his foot on the lowest stair.

Then he hesitated.

Dacres stood in the shadow of the other doorway, which was nearer to the head of the stairs, and prepared to spring as soon as the stranger should come within reach. But the stranger delayed still.

At length he spoke:

"Hallo, up there!"

The sound of those simple words produced an amazing effect upon the hearers. Dacres sprang down with a cry of joy. "Come, come!" he shouted to the ladies; "friends are here!" And running down the stairs, he reached the bottom and grasped the stranger by both arms.

In the dim light he could detect a tall, slim, sinewy form, with long, black, ragged hair and white neck-tie.

"You'd best get out of this, and quick, too," said the Rev. Saul Tozer. "They're all off now, but they'll be back here in less than no time. I jest thought I'd look in to see if any of you folks was around."

By this time the ladies were both at the bottom of the stairs.

"Come!" said Tozer; "hurry up, folks. I'll take one lady and you take t'other."

"Do you know the woods?"

"Like a book."

"So do I," said Dacres.

He grasped Mrs. Willoughby's hand and started.

"But Minnie!" said Mrs. Willoughby.

"You had better let him take her; it's safer for all of us," said Dacres.

Mrs. Willoughby looked back as she was dragged on after Dacres, and saw Tozer following them, holding Minnie's hand. This reassured her.

Dacres dragged her on to the foot of the bank. Here she tried to keep up with him, but it was steep, and she could not.

Whereupon Dacres stopped, and, without a word, raised her in his arms as though she were a little child, and ran up the bank. He plunged into the woods. Then he ran on farther. Then he turned and doubled.

Mrs. Willoughby begged him to put her down.

"No," said he; "they are behind us. You can not go fast enough. I should have to wait and defend you, and then we would both be lost."

"But, oh! we are losing Minnie."

"No, we are not," cried Dacres; "that man is ten times stronger than I am. He is a perfect elephant in strength. He dashed past me up the hill."

"I didn't see him."

"Your face was turned the other way. He is ahead of us now somewhere."

"Oh, I wish we *could* catch up to him."

"AT THIS, DACRES RUSHED ON FASTER."

At this Dacres rushed on faster. The effort was tremendous. He leaped over fallen timbers, he burst through the underbrush.

"Oh, I'm sure you'll *kill* yourself if you go so fast," said Mrs. Willoughby. "We can't catch up to them."

At this Dacres slackened his pace, and went on more carefully. She again begged him to put her down. He again refused. Upon this she felt perfectly helpless, and recalled, in a vague way, Minnie's ridiculous question of "How would you like to be run away with by a great, big, horrid man, Kitty darling?"

Then she began to think he was insane, and felt very anxious.

At last Dacres stopped. He was utterly exhausted. He was panting terribly. It had been a fearful journey. He had run along the bank up to that narrow valley which he had traversed the day before, and when he stopped it was on the top of that precipice where he had formerly rested, and where he had nurtured such dark purposes against Mrs. Willoughby.

Mrs. Willoughby looked at him, full of pity. He was utterly broken down by this last effort.

"Oh dear!" she thought, "Is he sane or insane? What *am* I to do? It is dreadful to have to go on and humor his queer fancies."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MINNIE'S LAST LIFE-PRESERVER.

When Tozer started after Dacres he led Minnie by the hand for only a little distance. On reaching the acclivity he seized her in his arms, thus imitating Dacres's example, and rushed up, reaching the top before the other. Then he plunged into the woods, and soon became separated from his companion.

Once in the woods, he went along quite leisurely, carrying Minnie without any difficulty, and occasionally addressing to her a soothing remark, assuring her that she was safe. Minnie, however, made no remark of any kind, good or bad, but remained quite silent, occupied with her own thoughts. At length Tozer stopped and put her down. It was a place upon the edge of a cliff on the shore of the lake, and as

"'WORSE AND WORSE,' SAID TOZER."

much as a mile from the house. The cliff was almost fifty feet high, and was perpendicular. All around was the thick forest, and it was unlikely that such a place could be discovered.

"Here," said he; "we've got to stop here, and it's about the right place. We couldn't get any where nigh to the soldiers without the brigands seeing us; so we'll wait here till the fight's over, and the brigands all chased off."

"The soldiers! what soldiers?" asked Minnie.

"Why, they're having a fight over there—the soldiers are attacking the brigands."

"Well, I didn't know. Nobody told me. And did you come with the soldiers?"

"Well, not exactly. I came with the priest and the young lady."

"But you were not at the house?"

"No. They wouldn't take me all the way. The priest said I couldn't be disguised—but I don't see why not—so he left me in the woods till he came back. And then the soldiers came, and we crept on till we came nigh the lake. Well, then I stole away; and when they made an attack the brigands all ran there to fight, and I watched till I saw the coast clear; and so I came, and here we are."

Minnie now was quite silent and preoccupied, and occasionally she glanced sadly at Tozer with her large, pathetic, child-like eyes. It was a very piteous look, full of the most tender entreaty. Tozer occasionally glanced at her, and then, like her, he sat silent, involved in his own thoughts.

"And so," said Minnie at last, "you're not the priest himself?"

"The priest?"

"Yes."

"Well, no; I don't call myself a priest. I'm a minister of the Gospel."

"Well, you're not a *real* priest, then."

"All men of my calling are real priests—yes, priests and kings. I yield to no man in the estimate which I set upon my high and holy calling."

"Oh, but I mean a Roman Catholic priest," said Minnie.

"A Roman Catholic priest! Me! Why, what a question! Me! a Roman Catholic! Why, in our parts folks call me the Protestant Champion."

"Oh, and so you're only a Protestant, after all," said Minnie, in a disappointed tone.

"Only a Protestant!" repeated Tozer, severely—"*only* a Protestant. Why, ain't you one yourself?"

"Oh yes; but I hoped you were the other priest, you know. I did *so* want to have a Roman Catholic priest this time."

Tozer was silent. It struck him that this young lady was in danger. Her wish for a Roman Catholic priest boded no good. She had just come from Rome. No doubt she had been tampered with. Some Jesuits had caught her, and had tried to proselytize her. His soul swelled with indignation at the thought.

"Oh dear!" said Minnie again.

"What's the matter?" asked Tozer, in a sympathizing voice.

"I'm *so* sorry."

"What for?"

"Why, that you saved my life, you know."

"Sorry? sorry? that I saved your life?" repeated Tozer, in amazement.

"Oh, well, you know, I did *so* want to be saved by a Roman Catholic priest, you know."

"To be saved by a Roman Catholic priest!" repeated Tozer, pondering these words in his mind as he slowly pronounced them. He could make nothing of them at first, but finally concluded that they concealed some half-suggested tendency to Rome.

"I don't like this—I don't like this," he said, solemnly.

"What don't you like?"

"It's dangerous. It looks bad," said Tozer, with increased solemnity.

"What's dangerous? You look so solemn that you really make me feel quite nervous. What's dangerous?"

"Why, your words. I see in you, I think, a kind of leaning toward Rome."

"It isn't Rome," said Minnie. "I don't lean to Rome. I only lean a little toward a Roman Catholic priest."

"Worse and worse," said Tozer. "Dear! dear! dear! worse *and* worse. This beats all. Young woman, beware! But perhaps I don't understand you. You surely don't mean that your affections are engaged to any Roman Catholic priest. You can't mean *that*. Why, they can't marry."

"But that's just what I like them so for," said Minnie. "I like people that don't marry; I hate people that want to marry."

Tozer turned this over in his mind, but could

make nothing of it. At length he thought he saw in this an additional proof that she had been tampered with by Jesuits at Rome. He thought he saw in this a statement of her belief in the Roman Catholic doctrine of celibacy.

He shook his head more solemnly than ever.

"It's not Gospel," said he. "It's mere human tradition. Why, for centuries there was a married priesthood even in the Latin Church. Dunstan's chief measures consisted in a fierce war on the married clergy. So did Hildebrand's—Gregory the Seventh, you know. The Church at Milan, sustained by the doctrines of the great Ambrose, always preferred a married clergy. The worst measures of Hildebrand were against these good pastors and their wives. And in the Eastern Church they have always had it."

Of course all this was quite beyond Minnie; so she gave a little sigh, and said nothing.

"Now as to Rome," resumed Tozer. "Have you ever given a careful study to the Apocalypse—not a hasty reading, as people generally do, but a serious, earnest, and careful examination?"

"I'm sure I haven't any idea what in the world you're talking about," said Minnie. "I *wish* you wouldn't talk so. I don't understand one single word of what you say."

Tozer started and stared at this. It was a depth of ignorance that transcended that of the other young lady with whom he had conversed. But he attributed it all to "Roman" influences. They dreaded the Apocalypse, and had not allowed either of these young ladies to become acquainted with its tremendous pages. Moreover, there was something else. There was a certain light and trifling tone which she used in referring to these things, and it pained him. He sat involved in a long and very serious consideration of her case, and once or twice looked at her with so very peculiar an expression that Minnie began to feel very uneasy indeed.

Tozer at length cleared his throat, and fixed upon Minnie a very affectionate and tender look.

"My dear young friend," said he, "have you ever reflected upon the way you are living?"

At this Minnie gave him a frightened little look, and her head fell.

"You are young now, but you can't be young always; youth and beauty and loveliness all are yours, but they can't last; and now is the time for you to make your choice—now in life's gay morn. It ain't easy when you get old. Remember that, my dear. Make your choice now—now."

"Oh dear!" said Minnie; "I knew it. But I can't—and I don't want to—and I think it's *very* unkind in you. I don't want to make *any* choice. I don't want any of you. It's *so* horrid."

This was a dreadful shock to Tozer; but he could not turn aside from this beautiful yet erring creature.

"Oh, I entreat you—I implore you, my dear, *dear*—"

"I do *wish* you wouldn't talk to me that way, and call me your *dear*. I don't like it; no, not even if you *did* save my life, though really I didn't know there was any danger. But I'm not *your* dear."

And Minnie tossed her head with a little air of determination, as though she had quite made up her mind on that point.

"Oh, well now, really now," said Tozer, "it was only a natural expression. I *do* take a deep interest in you, my—that is—miss; I feel a sincere regard and affection and—"

"But it's no use," said Minnie. "You really *can't*, you know; and so, why, you *mustn't*, you know."

Tozer did not clearly understand this, so after a brief pause he resumed:

"But what I was saying is of far more importance. I referred to your life. Now you're not happy as you are."

"Oh yes, but I am," said Minnie, briskly.

Tozer sighed.

"I'm *very* happy," continued Minnie, "very, very happy—that is, when I'm with dear, darling Kitty, and dear, dear Ethel, and my darling old Dowdy, and dear, kind papa."

Tozer sighed again.

"You can't be *truly* happy thus," he said, mournfully. "You may think you are, but you *ain't*. My heart fairly yearns over you when I see you, so young, so lovely, and so innocent; and I know you can't be happy as you are. You must live otherwise. And oh, I pray you—I entreat you to set your affections elsewhere!"

"Well, then, I think it's very, very horrid in you to press me so," said, Minnie, with something actually like asperity in her tone; "but it's *quite* impossible."

"But oh, why?"

"Why, because I don't want to have things any different. But if I have to be worried and teased so, and if people insist on it so, why, there's only one that I'll *ever* consent to."

"And what is that?" asked Tozer, looking at her with the most affectionate solicitude.

"Why, it's—it's—" Minnie paused, and looked a little confused.

"It's what?" asked Tozer, with still deeper and more anxious interest.

"Why, it's—it's—Rufus K. Gunn."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE IMPATIENT BARON.

The brigands had resisted stubbornly, but finally found themselves without a leader. Girasole had disappeared; and as his voice no longer directed their movements, they began to fall into confusion. The attacking party, on the other hand, was well led, and made a steady advance, driving the enemy before them. At

"THE D

"THE DISCOVERY OF A BODY ON THE SHORE OF THE LAKE."

length the brigands lost heart, and took to flight. With a wild cheer the assailants followed in pursuit. But the fugitives took to the forest, and were soon beyond the reach of their pursuers in its familiar intricacies, and the victors were summoned back by the sound of the trumpet.

It was now daylight, and as the conquering party emerged from the forest they showed the uniform of the Papal Zouaves; while their leader, who had shown himself so skillful in forest warfare, proved to be no less a personage than our friend the Baron. Led by him, the party advanced to the old stone house, and here, drawing up his men in front, their leader rushed in, and searched every room. To his amazement, he found the house deserted, its only inmate being that dead brigand whom Girasole had mistaken for Hawbury. This discovery filled the Baron with consternation. He had expected to find the prisoners here, and his dismay and grief were excessive. At first he could not believe in his ill luck; but another search convinced him of it, and reduced him to a state of perfect bewilderment.

But he was not one who could long remain inactive. Feeling confident that the brigands were scattered every where in headlong flight, he sent his men out in different directions, into the woods and along the shore, to see if they could find any traces of the lost ones. He himself remained near the house, so as to direct the search most efficiently. After about an hour they came back, one by one, without being able to find many traces. One had found an empty coffin in a grave, another a woman's hood, a third had found a scarf. All of these had endeavored to follow up these traces, but without result. Finally a man approached who announced the discovery of a body on the shore of the lake. After him came a party who was carrying the corpse for the inspection of their captain.

The Baron went to look at it. The body showed a great gap in the skull. On questioning the men, he learned that they had found it on the shore, at the bottom of a steep rock, about half-way between the house and the place where they had first emerged from the woods. His head was lying pressed against a sharp rock in such a way that it was evident that he had fallen over the cliff, and had been instantly killed. The Baron looked at the face, and recognized the features of Girasole. He ordered it to be taken away and laid in the empty grave for future burial.

The Baron now became impatient. This was not what he had bargained for at all. At length he thought that they might have fled, and might now be concealed in the woods around; and together with this thought there came to his mind an idea of an effective way to reach them. The trumpeter could send forth a blast which could be heard far and wide. But what might, could, would, or should the trumpeter sound forth which should give the concealed listeners a certainty that the summons came from friends and not from foes? This the Baron puzzled over for some time. At length he solved this problem also, and triumphantly.

There was one strain which the trumpeter might sound that could not be mistaken. It would at once convey to the concealed hearers all the truth, and gently woo them home. It would be at once a note of victory, a song of joy, a call of love, a sound of peace, and an invitation—"Wanderer, come home!"

Of course there was only one tune that, to the mind of the Baron, was capable of doing this.

And of course that tune was "Yankee Doodle."

Did the trumpeter know it?

Of course he did.

Who does not know it?

All men know that tune. Man is born with an innate knowledge of the strain of "Yankee Doodle." No one can remember when he first learned it. The reason is because he never learned it at all. It was born in him.

So the trumpeter sounded it forth, and wild and high and clear and far the sounds arose; and it was "Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying; and answer, echoes, answer, Yankee Doodle dying."

And while the trumpet sounded the Baron listened and listened, and walked up and down, and fretted and fumed and chafed, and I'm afraid he swore a little too; and at last he was going to tell the trumpeter to stop his infernal noise, when, just at that moment, what should he see all of a sudden emerging from the woods but three figures!

And I'll leave you to imagine, if you can, the joy and delight which agitated the bosom of our good Baron as he recognized among these three figures the well-known face and form of his friend Hawbury. With Hawbury was a lady whom the Baron remembered having seen once in the upper hall of a certain house in Rome, on a memorable occasion, when he stood on the stairs calling *Min*. The lady was very austere then, but she was very gracious now, and very wonderfully sweet in the expression of her face. And with them was a stranger in the garb of a priest.

Now as soon as the party met the Baron, who rushed to meet them, Hawbury wrung his hand, and stared at him in unbounded astonishment.

"You!" he cried; "yourself, old boy! By Jove!"

"Yes," said the Baron. "You see, the moment we got into that ambush I kept my eye open, and got a chance to spring into the woods. There I was all right, and ran for it. I got into the road again a couple of miles back, got a horse, rode to Civita Castellana, and there I was lucky enough to find a company of Zouaves. Well, Sir, we came here flying, mind, I tell you, and got hold of a chap that we made guide us to the lake. Then we opened on them; and here we are, by thunder! But where's Min?"

"Who?" asked Hawbury.

"Min," said the Baron, in the most natural tone in the world.

"Oh! Why, isn't she here?"

"No. We've hunted every where. No one's here at all." And the Baron went on to tell about their search and its results. Hawbury was chiefly struck by the news of Girasole.

"He must have gone mad with terror," said Hawbury, as he told the Baron about his adventure at the grave. "If that's so," he added, "I don't see how the ladies could be harmed. I dare say they've run off. Why, we started to run, and got so far off that we couldn't find our way back, even after the trumpet began to sound. You must keep blowing at it, you know. Play all the national tunes you can—no end. They'll find their way back if you give them time."

And now they all went back to the house, and the Baron in his anxiety could not talk any more, but began his former occupation of walking up and down, and fuming and fretting and chafing, and, I'm again afraid, swearing—when all of a sudden, on the bank in front of him, on the very top, just emerging from the thick underbrush which had concealed them till that moment, to their utter amazement and indescribable delight, they beheld Scone Dacres and Mrs. Willoughby. Scone Dacres appeared to Hawbury to be in a totally different frame of mind from that in which he had been when he last saw him; and what perplexed him most, yea, and absolutely confounded him, was the sight of Scone Dacres with his demon wife, whom he had been pursuing for the sake of vengeance, and whose frenzy had been so violent that he himself had been drawn with him on purpose to try and restrain him. And now what was the injured husband doing with his demon wife? Doing! why, doing the impassioned lover most vigorously; sustaining her steps most tenderly; grasping her hand; pushing aside the bushes; assisting her down the slope; overwhelming her, in short; hovering round her, apparently unconscious that there was in all the wide world any other being than Mrs. Willoughby. And as Hawbury looked upon all this his eyes dilated and his lips parted involuntarily in utter wonder; and finally, as Dacres reached the spot, the only greeting which he could give his friend was,

"By Jove!"

And now, while Mrs. Willoughby and Ethel were embracing with tears of joy, and overwhelming one another with questions, the Baron sought information from Dacres.

Dacres then informed him all about Tozer's advent and departure.

"Tozer!" cried the Baron, in intense delight. "Good on his darned old head! Hurrah for the parson! He shall marry us for this—he, and no other, by thunder!"

Upon which Mrs. Willoughby and Ethel exchanged glances, but said not a word. Not they.

But in about five minutes, when Mrs. Willoughby had Ethel apart a little by herself, she said,

"Oh, Ethel dear, isn't it dreadful?"

"What?" asked Ethel.

"Why, poor Minnie."

"Poor Minnie?"

"Yes. Another horrid man. And he'll be claiming her too. And, oh dear! what shall I do?"

"Why, you'll have to let her decide for herself. I think it will be—this person."

Mrs. Willoughby clasped her hands, and looked up with a pretty little expression of horror.

"And do you know, dear," added Ethel, "I'm beginning to think that it wouldn't be so *very* bad. He's Lord Hawbury's friend, you know, and then he's very, very brave; and, above all, think what we all owe him."

Mrs. Willoughby gave a resigned sigh.

And now the Baron was wilder with impatience than ever. He had questioned Dacres, and found that he could give him no information whatever as to Tozer's route, and consequently had no idea where to search. But he still had boundless confidence in "Yankee Doodle."

"That's the way," said Dacres; "we heard it ever so far, and it was the first thing that told us it was safe to return. We didn't dare to venture before."

Meanwhile Hawbury had got Dacres by himself, and poured a torrent of questions over him. Dacres told him in general terms how he was captured. Then he informed him how Mrs. Willoughby was put in the same room, and his

discovery that it was Minnie that the Italian wanted.

"Well, do you know, old chap," continued Dacres, "I couldn't stand it; so I offered to make it all up with her."

"Oh, I see you've done that, old boy. Congrat—"

"Pooh! wait a minute," said Dacres, interrupting him. "Well, you know, she wasn't my wife at all."

At this Hawbury stood utterly aghast.

"What's that?"

"She wasn't my wife at all. She looks confoundedly like what my wife was at her best, but she's another person. It's a most extraordinary likeness; and yet she's isn't any relation, but a great deal prettier woman. What made me so sure, you know, was the infernally odd coincidence of the name; and then I only saw her off and on, you know, and I never heard her voice. Then, you know, I was mad with jealousy; and so I made myself worse and worse, till I was ripe for murder, arson, assasination, and all that sort of thing, you know."

To all this Hawbury listened in amazement, and could not utter a word, until at last, as Dacres paused, he said,

"By Jove!"

"Well, old man, I was the most infernal ass that ever lived. And how I must have bored you!"

"By Jove!" exclaimed Hawbury again. "But drive on, old boy."

"Well, you know, the row occurred just then, and away went the scoundrels to the fight, and in came that parson fellow, and away we went. I took Mrs. Willoughby to a safe place, where I kept her till I heard the trumpet, you know. And I've got another thing to tell you. It's deuced odd, but she knew all about me."

"The deuce she did!"

"Yes, the whole story. Lived somewhere in the county. But I don't remember the Fays. At any rate, she lived there; and do you know, old fellow, the county people used to think I beat my wife!"

"By Jove!"

"Yes; and afterward they raised a report that my cruelty had driven her mad. But I had a few friends that stood up for me; and among others these Fays, you know, had heard the truth of it, and, as it happened, Kitty—"

"Kitty?"

"Well, Mrs. Willoughby, I mean—her name's Kitty—has always known the truth about it; and when she saw me at Naples she felt interested in me."

"Oho!" and Hawbury opened his eyes.

"Well, she knew all about it; and, among other things, she gave me one piece of intelligence that has eased my mind."

"Ah! what's that?"

"Why, my wife *is* dead."

"Oh, then there's no doubt about it?"

"Not a bit. She died eight years ago, and in an insane asylum."

"By Jove! Then she was mad all the time."

"Yes; that accounts for it, and turns all my curses into pity."

Dacres was silent now for a few moments. At length he looked at Hawbury with a very singular expression.

"Hawbury, old boy."

"Well, Sconey?"

"I think we'll keep it up."

"Who?"

"Why, Kitty and I—that is, Mrs. Willoughby and I—her name's Kitty, you know."

"Keep what up?"

"Why, the—the—the fond illusion, and all that sort of thing. You see I've got into such an infernal habit of regarding her as my wife that I can't look on her in any other light. I claimed her, you know, and all that sort of thing, and she thought I was delirious, and felt sorry, and humored me, and gave me a very favorable answer."

"Humored you?"

"Yes; that's what she says now, you know. But I'm holding her to it, and I've every reason to believe, you know—in fact, I may as well say that it is an understood thing, you know, that she'll let it go, you know, and at some early day, you know, we'll have it all formally settled, and all that sort of thing, you know."

Hawbury wrung his friend's hand.

"See here, old boy; you see Ethel there?"

"Yes."

"Who do you think she is?"

"Who?"

"*Ethel Orne!*"

"Ethel *Orne!*" cried Dacres, as the whole truth flashed on his mind. "What a devil of a jumble every thing has been getting into! By Heaven, dear boy, I congratulate you from the bottom of my soul!"

And he wrung Hawbury's hand as though all his soul was in that grasp.

But all this could not satisfy the impatience of the Baron. This was all very well in its way, merely as an episode; but he was waiting for the chief incident of the piece, and the chief incident was delaying very unaccountably.

So he strode up and down, and he fretted and he fumed and he chafed, and the trumpeter kept blowing away.

Until at last—

Just before his eyes—

Up there on the top of the bank, not far from where Dacres and Mrs. Willoughby had made their appearance, the Baron caught sight of a tall, lank, slim figure, clothed in rusty black, whose thin and leathery face, rising above a white neck-tie, peered solemnly yet interrogatively through the bushes; while just behind him the Baron caught a glimpse of the flutter of a woman's dress.

"HE GAVE A LOUD CRY OF JOY, AND THEN SPRANG UP THE BANK."

He gave a loud cry of joy, and then sprang up the bank.

* * * * * *

But over that meeting I think we had better draw a veil.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ASTONISHING WAY OF CONCLUDING AN ADVENTURE.

The meeting between the Baron and Minnie gave a new shock to poor Mrs. Willoughby, who looked with a helpless expression, and walked away for a little distance. Dacres and Hawbury were still eagerly conversing and questioning one another about their adventures. Tozer also had descended and joined himself to the priest; and each of these groups had leisure for a prolonged conversation before they were interrupted. At length Minnie made her appearance, and flung herself into her sister's arms, while at the same time the Baron grasped Tozer by both hands, and called out, in a voice loud enough to be heard by all,

"You shall marry us, parson—and this very day, by thunder!"

These words came to Mrs. Willoughby's ears in the midst of her first joy at meeting her sister, and shocked her inexpressibly.

"What's that, Minnie darling?" she asked, anxiously. "What is it? Did you hear what that dreadful—what the—the Baron said?"

Minnie looked sweetly conscious, but said nothing.

"What *does* he mean?" asked her sister again.

"I suppose he means what he says," replied Minnie, with a timid air, stealing a shy look at the Baron.

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Willoughby; "there's another dreadful trouble, I know. It's very, very hard."

"Well, I'm sure," said Minnie, "I can't help it. They all do so. That clergyman came and saved me, and he wasn't a Roman Catholic clergyman at all, and he proposed—"

"Proposed!" cried Mrs. Willoughby, aghast.

"Oh yes," said Minnie, solemnly; "and I had hard work preventing him. But, really, it was *too* absurd, and I would not let him be too explicit. But I didn't hurt his feelings. Well, you know, then all of a sudden, as we were sitting there, the bugle sounded, and we came back. Well, then, Rufus K. Gunn came—and you know how very violent he is in his way—and he said he saved my life again, and so he proposed."

"*He* proposed! Why, he had proposed before."

"Oh yes; but that was for an engagement, and this was for our marriage."

"Marriage!"

"Oh yes; and, you see, he had actually saved my life twice, and he was very urgent, and he is so *awfully* affectionate, and so—"

"Well, what?" cried Mrs. Willoughby, seeing Minnie hesitate.

"Why, he—"

"Well?"

"I mean, I—"

"You what? Really, Minnie dearest, you might tell me, and not keep me in such dreadful suspense."

"Why, what could I say?"

"But what *did* you say?"

"Why, I think I—said—yes," said Minnie, casting down her eyes with indescribable sweetness, shyness, meekness, and resignation.

Mrs. Willoughby actually shuddered.

"Now, Kitty," exclaimed Minnie, who at once noticed it, "you needn't be so horrid. I'm sure you can't say any thing against him *now*. You needn't look so. You *always* hated him. You *never* would treat him kindly.

"But this—this marriage. It's too shocking."

"Well, he saved my life."

"And to-day! How utterly preposterous! It's shameful!"

"Well, I'm sure I can't help it."

"It's too horrid!" continued Mrs. Willoughby, in an excited tone. "It will break poor papa's heart. And it will break poor darling aunty's heart. And it will break my heart."

"Now, Kitty dearest, this is too silly in you. If it hadn't been for him, I would now be married to that wretched Count, who hadn't sufficient affection for me to get me a chair to sit on, and who was very, very rude to you. You didn't care, though, whether I was married to him or not; and now when I am saved from him you have nothing but very unpleasant things to say about Rufus K. Gunn."

"Oh dear, what *would* I give if you were only safe home!"

"Well, I'm sure I don't see what *I* can do. People are always saving my life. And there is Captain Kirby hunting all over Italy for me. And I *know* I will be saved by somebody—if—if—I—I—if—I—if—you know—that is—I'm sure—"

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Willoughby, as Minnie broke down in confusion. "It is *too* absurd. I won't talk about it. You are a silly child. Oh, how I *do* wish you were home!"

At this juncture the conversation was interrupted by the Baron.

"It is not my fashion, ma'am," said he, gravely, "to remind another of any obligation under which he may be to me; but my claims on Minnie have been so opposed by you and the rest of her friends that I have to ask you to think of them. Your father knows what my first claims are. You yourself, ma'am, know perfectly well what the last claims are which I have won to-day."

The Baron spoke calmly, firmly, and with dignity. Mrs. Willoughby answered not a word.

"If you think on your position last night, and Minnie's, ma'am," resumed the Baron, "you'll acknowledge, I expect, that it was pretty hard lines. What would you have given a few hours ago for a sight of my uniform in that old house yonder? If I had come then to save Minnie from the clutches of that Italian, wouldn't you have given her to me with all your heart, and your prayers too? You would, by thunder! Think, ma'am, on your sufferings last night, and then answer me."

Mrs. Willoughby, involuntarily thought of that night of horror, and shuddered, and said nothing.

"Now, ma'am, just listen to this. I find on coming here that this Italian had a priest here all ready to marry him and Minnie. If I'd been delayed or defeated, Minnie would have been that rascal's wife by this time. The priest is here. They would have been married as sure as you're born. You, ma'am, would have had to see this poor, trembling, broken-hearted, despairing girl torn from your arms, and bound by the marriage tie to a ruffian and a scoundrel whom she loathed. And now, ma'am, I save her from this. I have my priest too, ma'am. He ain't a Roman Catholic, it is true—he's an orthodox parson—but, at the same time, I ain't particular. Now I propose to avail myself this day of his invaluable services at the earliest hour possible; but, at the same time, if Min prefers it, I don't object to the priest, for I have a kind of Roman Catholic leaning myself.

"Now you may ask, ma'am," continued the Baron, as Mrs. Willoughby continued silent—"you may ask why I'm in such a thundering hurry. My answer is, because you fit me off so. You tried to keep me from Min. You locked me out of your house. You threatened to hand me over to the po-lice (and I'd like to see one of them try it on with me). You said I was mad or drunk; and finally you tried to run away. Then you neglected my advice, and plunged head-foremost into this fix. Now, in view of all this, my position is this—that I can't trust you. I've got Min now, and I mean to keep her. If you got hold of her again, I feel it would be the last of her. Consequently I ain't going to let her go. Not me. Not by a long chalk.

"Finally, ma'am, if you'll allow me, I'll touch upon another point. I've thought over your objections to me. It ain't my rank—I'm a noble; it ain't money—I'm worth a hundred thousand dollars; it ain't my name—for I call myself Atramonte. It must be something in me. I've come to the conclusion that it's my general style—my manners and customs. Very well. Perhaps they don't come up to your standard. They mayn't square with your ideas. Yet, let me tell you, ma'am, there are other standards of action and manner and speech than those to which you are accustomed, and mine is one of them. Minnie doesn't object to that. She knows my heart is all right, and is willing to trust herself to me. Consequently I take her, and I mean to make her mine this day."

As the Baron paused Mrs. Willoughby began, first of all, to express her gratitude, and then to beg him to postpone the marriage. She declared that it was an unheard-of thing, that it was shameful, that it was shocking, that it was dreadful. She grew very much excited;

she protested, she entreated. Finally she burst into tears, and appealed to Lord Hawbury in the most moving terms. Hawbury listened very gravely, with his eyes wandering over to where Ethel was; and Ethel caught the expression of his face, and looked quite confused.

"Oh, think, only think," said Mrs. Willoughby, after an eloquent and pathetic appeal—"think how the poor child will be talked about!"

"Well, really—ah—'pon my life," said Hawbury, with his eyes still wandering over toward Ethel, "I'm sure I don't—ah—share your views altogether, Mrs. Willoughby; for—ah—there *are* times, you know, when a fellow finds it very uncommonly desirable—runaway matches, you know, and all that sort of thing. And, by Jove! to tell the truth, I really admire the idea, by Jove! And really—ah—I'm sure—I wish most confoundedly it was the universal fashion, by Jove!"

"But she'll be *so* talked about. She'll make herself so shockingly *conspicuous*."

"Conspicuous? By Jove!" said Hawbury, who seemed struck by the idea. At that moment Minnie began talking to her sister, and Hawbury went off to Ethel, to whom he began talking in the most earnest manner. The two wandered off for some distance, and did not return for a full half hour. When they did return Ethel looked somewhat embarrassed, and Hawbury was radiant. With this radiance on his face he went up to Mrs. Willoughby, leaving Ethel in the backgronnd.

"Oh, by-the-way," said he, "you were remarking that your sister would be too conspicuous by such a hasty marriage."

"Yes," said Mrs. Willoughby, anxiously.

"Well, I thought I would tell you that she needn't be so *very* conspicuous; for, in fact—that is, you know, Ethel and I—she told you, I suppose, about our mistake?"

"Oh yes."

"And I think I've persuaded her to save Minnie from being too conspicuous."

Mrs. Willoughby gave Hawbury a look of astonishment and reproach.

"You!" she cried; "and Ethel!"

"Why, I'm sure, we're the very ones you might expect it from. Think how infernally we've been humbugged by fate."

"Fate!" said Mrs. Willoughby. "It was all your own fault. She was chosen for you."

"Chosen for me? What do you mean?"

"By your mother."

"My mother?"

"Yes."

"She said one of Bigg's nieces."

"Ethel is that niece."

"The devil!" cried Hawbury. "I beg pardon. By Jove!"

Hawbury, overwhelmed by this, went back to Ethel, and they wandered off once more. The Baron had already wandered off with Minnie in another direction. Tozer and the priest had gone to survey the house.

Seeing Mrs. Willoughby thus left alone, Dacres drifted up to her. He came up silently.

"Kitty," said he, in a low voice, "you seem sad."

By which familiar address it will be seen that Dacres had made some progress toward intimacy with her.

Mrs. Willoughby did not seem at all offended at this, but looked up with one of her frankest smiles, and the clouds of perplexity passed away. She was an exceedingly pretty woman, and she was certainly not over twenty-four.

"I'm *so* worried," she said, plaintively.

"What's the matter?" asked Dacres, in a tone of the deepest and tenderest sympathy.

"Why, these horrid men; and, what's worse, Lord Hawbury is actually encouraging Mr.—the—the Baron; and I'm *so* worried. Oh dear!"

"But why should you be worried?"

"It's *so* horrid. It's shocking. It's not to be thought of."

"But why not?" asked Dacres.

"Why, it's—it's so horrid," said Mrs. Willoughby.

Dacres stood looking at her for a long time.

"Kitty," said he at last.

Mrs. Willoughby looked up.

Dacres looked all around. He then took her hand.

"Isn't it too bad," he said, "to let Minnie—"

"What?"

"To let her go through this ordeal alone?"

"Alone!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, looking in wonder at him.

"Yes."

"What *do* you mean?"

"Couldn't *we* accompany her?"

Mrs. Willoughby snatched away her hand.

"Are you mad?" she cried. "I do believe the whole world's mad to-day."

"Mad!" cried Dacres. "Yes, I'm mad—insane—raving! Won't you be merciful again? Won't you, Kitty? Won't you 'humor' my ravings? Oh, do. Oh, Kitty! dear Kitty—!"

"It's positive insanity!"

"Oh, Kitty!"

"You're raving!"

"Won't you 'humor' me—just this once! only this once."

"Hush! there they come," said Mrs. Willoughby, suddenly snatching away her hand, which Dacres had somehow got hold of again, and moving a little further away from him.

It was the Baron and Minnie who were coming back again, while Hawbury and Ethel were seen a little further away.

There they all stood—there, on the spot where they had found the crisis of their fortunes; and as they stood there the two clergymen, Catholic and Protestant, slowly came out of the house.

THE END.